

LINN

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Creston High School incident brings up questions of racism

By Marissa Good

Last week, five Iowa students from Creston Community High School were pictured in a photo while wearing white Ku Klux Klan hoods and standing in front of a burning cross. In the photo, one of the students is holding a rifle and one is holding what appears to be a Confederate flag.

According to an article from *The Des Moines Register*, the photo surfaced on social media on September 4, a Wednesday morning, and the students received suspension and were removed from the football team. However, no legal action has yet to be taken due to free speech rights, and because the photo was taken off school grounds and was not targeting specific people. What do the citizens of Creston have to say about the event? Some people, like Creston High senior and member of the football team Tucker Wayne Flynn, feel that this is a complete misrepresentation of their community.

Flynn said, "I can promise everyone that as a whole, our football team and community aren't about that. The actions made by a small group shouldn't represent the entire football team and community. I'm proud to be a part of what this team is actually about and it's sad to see something like this ruin a rich tradition we carry."

Jenny Berning, Creston citizen and mother of a current Creston High student, said, "I would say I was very surprised and shocked. Knowing the families on a personal level made it even more surprising. I don't feel this is typical behavior or feelings among the high school students at all. I honestly have no idea why something like this would ever happen! Can't even begin to guess why those boys would even think up such a thing. I can't really say the fault lies on a certain thing. I do think the media plays a big role in it. Knowing each of the families, I can say in this situation I do not believe it is from anything learned at home. Yes they are kids, but I do think they are old enough to know

better. I think kids these days really need to understand how social media can ruin a person in a matter of seconds."

Jamie and Megan Travis, the parents of one of the children in the photo, did publicly apologize on behalf of their family.

"We understand that our son has conducted himself in a way that is inappropriate and has caused disruption in the community. Our son recognizes his poor judgment and respectfully asks forgiveness from his classmates, the school and the community. The photo in no way reflects our family values. Our family strongly believes that all individuals are created equally in God's eyes," said the Travis family.

Many wonder what will be done in school to prevent future instances like this. Creston High Principal Bill Messerole said that he plans to incorporate school wide sensitivity and diversity training among other long-term efforts.

Linn-Mar students have different reactions about this event. Junior football player Nagisa Carolin said, "Yeah, I mean personally, I think that it's really awful, and while Linn-Mar is still predominantly white, it's still offensive and not okay. Personally, I would have them removed if I were a coach, and see if I could get them into any legal trouble as well."

Diamond Purchase, senior, said, "I think they should've been expelled because no one should have anyone who thinks the KKK is okay in their school. I honestly do not think it could've been prevented because racism is taught at home and you cannot tell people how to raise their children, but if there was a way to do so, maybe it should be made more aware in schools."

Junior Emma Kelley also stated that she thinks legal action should be taken and also believes racism starts in the home, so there is no way of preventing these kind of situations.

"They see it from their parents

and get similar beliefs," said Kelley.

Others, like Junior Bryce Spencer feel that one's behavior and beliefs are not just based on the home you grew up in, but the community.

"I think that racism derives from uncomfortability (sic) and how you grew up in society. For example, I lived on a street made up of purely white people--it just happened to be that way. If I wasn't exposed to other people, and I saw someone of a different skin color, I'd automatically feel more uncomfortable because I'm not familiar," said Spencer.

Paul Kahler, junior, states that he believes the internet is a major contributor. "Well, it's really easy to find racist content on the internet, and that content can change opinions if someone sees it enough. The internet has kind of been a

megaphone for the most extreme opinions, and racism is one of those things."

Could this type of event ever happen at Linn-Mar? Both Purchase and Spencer say no.

"I don't think this kind of event would happen at Linn-Mar, but Linn-Mar is a majority Caucasian people. I do believe that Linn-Mar is very inclusive with every race. But I have dealt with some small negative comments about my race," said Purchase.

Kelley said, "Maybe it could happen. I feel like it's an inclusive atmosphere, but there could always be those situations."

Most students agree with Spencer when he said, "I think that picture is a complete misrepresentation of Iowa."

Homecoming King and Queen



Above: Tyler Green and Sydney Von Lehmden were crowned Homecoming King and Queen at the 2017 Coronation celebration.

Halloween not just for kids anymore

By Billy Nix

Who said Halloween's only for kids?

According to Forbes.com, adults have actually hijacked Halloween from kids, in fact two in three adults said they actually feel that Halloween is a holiday for them. However, many might say that adults have actually hurt Halloween by changing the traditional style of door to door trick-or-treating. Many adults now substitute trunk-or-treats at schools and churches due to rising security concerns. Obesity concerns is also causing less candy to be given out and replaced by healthier treats or non-edible items like pencils or stickers. Over the last ten years, more adults have found themselves celebrating the holiday by dressing up and going to a Halloween themed party.

According to a recent survey among adults, the top ten Halloween activities are:

- 1) Watching a scary movie
- 2) Binge-watching a season of

- American Horror Story
- 3) Carving pumpkins
- 4) Go to an apple bobbing party
- 5) Going on a hayride
- 6) Going to a haunted house
- 7) Going to or hosting a Halloween party
- 8) Baking a cake
- 9) Putting oneself into a sugar coma
- 10) Handing out candy

Nathan Hopp, who works in Student Assistance Services, says he usually finds himself at his parent's house handing out candy with their two cats on Halloween.

According to CNN and the National Retail Foundation, in 2005 only 52.5% of Americans were estimated to celebrate Halloween but by 2012, the number increased to 71.5%. A large percentage of the growth is from adults.

Thirteen percent of adults age 18-44 say Halloween is their favorite holiday and many companies encourage employees to wear a costume to work on October 31st. Most popular Halloween costume?

About 6 million adults will dress as witches and 3.2 million will dress as vampires according to forbes.com.

Two in three adults who like Halloween believe in ghosts with 33 percent claiming they have seen one with their own eyes. Twenty-eight percent of people surveyed says they believe in people cursing other people.

Fifty percent of Americans will decorate their homes for Halloween

at an average expense of \$19.79 per person. Americans, on average, spend \$370 million on pet costumes alone, with the most popular pet costume being a pumpkin at 13 percent, followed by devil at 7 percent, and a hotdog at 6 percent. Many adults have claimed that they love Halloween more now than when they were kids and the statistics seem to show that to be a fact.



Halloween's popularity second only to Christmas

By Naquaria Hampton

It's that time of year again; yes, Halloween is back. Get ready for haunted houses, costumes, parties, candy, and scary movies. Perhaps the main focus for Halloween centers around costumes and trick or treating, the two-most talked about topics around the fall time, especially if you have little kids in the family.

Halloween costumes are plentiful with a seemingly endless selection. Between pop-up shops like Halloween Express and the internet, it's no longer a challenge to come up with a clever idea. People seem happy to shell out cash to dress up in various costumes, too, ranging from spooky to adorable. In fact, according to KCRG, over the last seven years, Halloween spending on costumes outranked spending on any other Halloween-related item, including scary movies or haunted houses.

Most people say they start planning their costumes ahead of time, but admit that the final product doesn't always turn out as planned.

The trend recently has been to go simpler. In 2015, the top five Halloween costumes were Pirates, Vampires, Princesses, Action/Superheroes, and Zombies. Many people attribute the Zombie phase to the television series 'Walking Dead.' Costumes took a wild turn in 2016, according to USA Today. Last year's top four costumes were Princesses, Batman, Death, and

Clowns and Donald Trump tied at number one for the most popular costume.

According to the National Retail Federation, kids' top choices for 2017 are perennial characters such as Batman, Star Wars and superheroes Spider Man and Captain America. Other choices for children are animals (cats, dogs, monkeys), witches, pirates, ghosts and Wonder Woman. Many of these characters are also favored by adults with the addition of vampires, zombies and slasher movie villains such as Jason from the Halloween movie series, Freddy Krueger and the Scream mask.

Also expected to be popular are Pennywise from the blockbuster IT, and Twisty the Clown from American Horror Story. Based on an Ebay search, political figures such as Donald Trump, Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin will also be popular.

One question that always seems to surface this time of year is "How old is too old to go trick or treating?" Some people say that trick or treating is for children only, but others say that age doesn't matter. A common age to stop going door to door for candy seems to be about age 13 (about 7th or 8th grade) but others say you can continue to collect candy if you want, no matter the age. According to USA Today, the common consensus seems to be that "Trick or treating needs to stop at the age of 13" but other sites say the trend is shifting upward to about

16 years of age. A majority of people polled say they don't care how old the trick-or-treater is if they are having fun and not harming anyone.

Cory Hannison, a freshman at Linn-Mar High School says, "I didn't like going trick or treating as a young kid because I would come back with only a few pieces of candy. But that's because I went out too early and came back early."

So what was the favorite Halloween costume for Linn-Mar students? According to a poll, the guys

favored A Superhero or a Supervillain while girls favored a Princess or a female Superhero.

Not everyone has that special Halloween story from childhood, but sometimes the best stories result from failures. Hannah Burks, Linn-Mar senior said, "I remember seeing my Halloween costume and I started crying. I had nothing else to wear and I thought it was ugly, but when I put it on, I really loved it. That's all I wore for like 2 weeks but then my mom made me throw it away."



Fall leads to falling leaves, apple orchards and pumpkin patches

By Lauryn Klahn

As the leaves are changing colors and blanketing yards this fall, take a moment and think about all the activities available to you in the Marion and Cedar Rapids area before you only think about summer ending and the cold winter season beginning. Apple picking, pumpkin patches, making fall treats, and going to football games are just some of the activities that come along with the season of fall.

Apple orchards are great place to spend a fall day. Picking apples is a popular activity but many orchards offer even more than that to do. Allen's Apple Orchard, located in Marion, has over 40 varieties of apples throughout the year, so you can even go pick in other seasons. The "U-Pick" option at the orchard is available Saturday and Sundays during open season. This option lets you pick your own apples straight from the trees in the orchard.

Along with apple picking, Allen's also has other fresh produce and treats available according to the Allen's Apple Orchard website. Some of the fall treats include donuts, turnovers, pies, and caramel apples. Make sure you pick up some warm apple cider on your visit as well!

Pumpkin Patches are also a fantastic place to spend a day. Bart's Pumpkin Farm, located in Marion, offers free admission into the pumpkin patch so it will work for someone on a budget. Other activities offered at this pumpkin patch include a small corn maze, pony rides, and hay rack rides.

In case you're not feeling like leaving the house to participate in fall, there are always plenty of treats to be made right in the comfort of your own home. A lot of treats can be store-bought but taking a day with friends to bake will be fun and fill the house with amazing smells.

A popular fall treat is caramel apples. Picking your favorite type of apple and covering it with caramel, or even other candies or nuts if you wish, is easy and delicious. Cookies are also a great treat option. The pre-made cookies with fall or Halloween prints on them are always popular.

Fall is also a great time to make pies. Pumpkin and apple are the well-liked pies during the fall because you can use the pumpkins or apples you picked from the orchard or pumpkin patch to bake these pies.

Friday night football games always allow for a good time and

great energy. The Linn-Mar football team has a game every Friday night, although some of them aren't at home. All the games have a theme, so everyone will be dressed up in fun outfits to support the Lions. There are also many cheers done at the game to get the student sections more involved so there really is never a dull moment during the game.

Fall is a great time to do the activities that aren't available to us in

other times of the year. So, this fall make sure you are taking full advantage of the apple orchards, pumpkin

patches, and football games that are nearby. Also, don't forget to enjoy some of the many tasty fall treats!



Just asking no longer good enough

By Marissa Good

Ahhhhh, Homecoming rituals. Class is over and a girl walks out of her classroom to see a guy holding a giant poster in one hand, with a bouquet of flowers in the other. She barely knows the guy, but how can she say no to his invitation when he went to all that trouble to ask her? This is just one type of problem that can arise from the expectations high school students have nowadays for what's become known as "Homecoming proposals." Many people will say that this is a new phenomenon and that a simple 'Will you go to the dance with me?' would suffice. Others seem to love these grand gestures. According to the *Washington Post*, the first newspaper to have used the phrase 'promposal' seems to have been the *Dallas Morning News* in 2001. The paper commented on what appeared to be a charming new phenomenon. The next promposal story didn't show up until a year later, in 2002, but there was an outbreak of promposals after that. Everything from trails of rose petals, to yards filled with balloons, and even billboards were seen.

Then, in October of 2005, the teen reality show "Laguna Beach" aired a prom-proposal episode, in which some of the show's young men tried to woo their lady friends with tow trucks and gorilla suits, according to the *Washington Post*. This turned out to be a pivotal moment in promposal history. Years later, teens would cite this episode as their inspiration for their own elaborate asking of dates.

In 2006, promposals then appeared on social media such as Facebook and Twitter, but Youtube is considered the true starting place of promposals seen online. By 2011, the social media agency Sq1 reported that 20,000 prom videos were uploaded in a one-month period of the 2011 prom season. In 2012, the askings seemed to move from online to the asking of celebrities, with people thinking that an elaborate scene could raise their chances of a yes.

Leon Purvis from New Jersey, for example, persuaded teachers and peers to help him get the hashtag #GuyAsksJustinBieberToPromOnYouTube, but he was rejected by Bieber. However, there were some success stories, such as Texas student Mark Ramirez, who persuaded a Houston Texas cheerleader to go to a dance with him after his tweet about her was retweeted about 10,000 times. Many think that elaborate askings aren't worth the effort that must be put in, especially adults who had a very different experience with their high school dance rituals.

Linn-Mar middle school teacher Ryan Shaffer, age 28, says, "In high school if you were dating someone, you didn't have to ask to go to Homecoming together, it was just assumed. If you were single and you wanted to ask someone out, a common method was MSN messenger or on Facebook. If you were really after a girl, maybe you could buy her a card and some flowers or something, and ask her out face to face, but most of

the time it was low key and you did it online. Honestly, today I think it's a little over the top for Homecoming. I always thought prom was a big deal, but Homecoming was more casual. I'm glad I didn't have to put that much creativity or effort into asking someone to the dance!"

Another Linn-Mar teacher, Jenny Brase, agrees.

"If you were dating it was just assumed that you would go together. There was no formal asking. Otherwise you might have called on the phone to ask or even had a friend ask for you! You did not go to the dance if you didn't have a date. It was a bit scary asking someone as it was more one on one then. No one came with you (to ask). It was more private. I think Homecoming proposals now are unfortunate. I think some kids are too shy to ask in this manner or worry that their way of asking is not good enough or won't get a lot of 'likes' on social media. Homecoming now seems to be more about the proposal than the actual event. I don't see anything wrong with a simple asking. It would take the pressure off and get some kids to go to the dance who wouldn't otherwise go because of the need to do a proposal."

At Linn-Mar High School, many of the Homecoming proposals this year have been very creative. Some examples include sushi puns along with real sushi, a giant poster made to look like a lemonade stand, and a poster of giraffe puns held while the asker was dressed in giraffe footie pajamas.

What do students think of the elaborate askings?

Junior Gloria Chang says, "I like the puns and it makes it feel more special."

Freshman Rachel Duffy agrees.

"The fact that Homecoming proposals are a big deal makes the idea of Homecoming more exciting, but it puts pressure on the people planning to ask."

Junior Ben Wilson says, "I mean, I don't really like it, but I don't mind it either. I would rather not have to devote time to something that doesn't really matter after you ask them. No one cares in the long run if you covered a girl's car in sticky notes your junior year of high school."

Would a big poster proposal make a student more likely to say yes?

"Significantly more likely," Wilson says. "It's kinda hard to say no. You feel like you're in a binding contract with that person because they put all that work in. You shouldn't necessarily have to settle for the first person that asks you just because they put that work in."

Chang says the poster would make it harder to say no.

"You feel obligated to say yes, especially if it's in front of people. If someone just asked with words, you wouldn't feel the need to say yes."

Bryce Spencer says, "I believe that the culture of Homecoming proposals has evolved into a situation where if you don't do something big, you're doing it wrong."

Fighting stress and dealing with the death of her dad, Bartelme finding life is different outside of high school

By Emily Pistulka

Jenna Bartelme, former Linn-Mar High School student, is a creative and open-minded person who has been through a lot. Let's take a look at Jenna's life.

Where is your favorite vacation spot and why?

Arizona because you can be super active, and it's never rainy or windy so weather can't get in the way of enjoying your vacation. I go there every summer and I love it so much.

How many pets do you have?

I have 6 pets. I love and hate having this many. My dog gets in the garbage and chews our shoes, and we have cat hair everywhere from the cats but they are my best friends so I love it and I always have someone to cuddle with or talk to.

What is your favorite holiday?

Christmas because it's the most festive and happy all around and I love snow on Christmas day and being with family.

What is your favorite season?

Fall because of the colors, the outfits, the weather, and the activities that go on. I love going to haunted houses and pumpkin patches with my friends.

What career are you thinking of going into after college and why?

I'm thinking of going into engineering or architecture after college because those are the only two things I can see myself enjoying for a long period of time, and engineering gives you lots of possibilities.

What is something that you are obsessed with?

I'm obsessed with the things that we as humans have yet to discover because it lets me use my imagination and come up with ideas and be creative. I like the fact that all of the things we know now were once just ideas in someone's imagination and now they are things that everyone knows and things that we just look past every day without realizing it, but at one point it changed the world.

What do you do in your free time?

When I have free time I try to spend it with my friends or family, otherwise I usually nap or watch TV because I hardly have time to relax.

What were you really into when you were a kid?

I was really into reading. I used to read books all of the time. One time I read a new book every single day for a week. Reading helped me escape and once I started a book I couldn't put it down.

What is your favorite TV show?

Once Upon a Time. It's a mixture of all of our childhood fairy tales and princesses and there is magic and stuff in it so it's like you're in

a different world when you watch it and you forget about your own busy life.

What is your favorite movie?

Moana because it reminded me of being a little kid. Such a cute movie and it touched my heart. I could watch it over and over.

What is your favorite type of music to listen to and why?

I love rap music. One of my favorite things to do is try to learn all of the lyrics to complicated rap songs.

How often are you on your phone or check your phone?

I constantly check my phone so many times throughout the day. If I'm being completely honest I probably check my phone every five minutes. I check social media all day, constantly. It's an unhealthy addiction.

What is your favorite food?

Mac and Cheese will always be my favorite food. I constantly crave mac and cheese. There is something about it that I love so much, it's cheap too.

Where is your favorite restaurant or place to eat?

Chipotle is my favorite restaurant for sure. Their ingredients are so fresh and tasty and I would eat Mexican food any day over anything.

What is the most annoying habit to you that other people have?

I cannot stand it when people chomp their gum super loud. So many of my friends do it and it's the most annoying thing ever.

What are some small things that make your day better?

Coffee, desserts, my bed, friends, and family, always make my days go better. If I'm ever down I can count on one of these things to perk me up.

What is the most heartwarming thing you have ever seen?

One time I was at a stoplight and saw a family in a van pull over to a homeless woman and give her a basket of food and some blankets and clothes. Little thoughtful things like that make me so happy.

What are you most looking forward to in the next 10 years?

I'm looking forward to getting married and then living in my own house that I will get to decorate however I want. I can't wait to have my own family someday, and hopefully have a job that I love.

Where do you work and do you like your job?

Currently I work at Biaggi's. I love my job and the staff. I enjoy going to work and very rarely get bored because the people are so friendly and funny.

Who would you consider your role model and why?

My role model is definitely my

mom. She is such a strong person and has been through so much in her life. I want to follow in her footsteps and be just as great as a mom as she is when I'm older.

What do you take for granted?

I take for granted my house. I always find myself complaining about it being small and other things I don't like about it. I need to be thankful that I have a house, and I need to realize things could be much worse.

What is the most interesting thing you have experienced in your life?

When I went to New York. It was such a cool experience and I saw lots of cool things I have always wanted to see.

Do you remember the day that your dad died?

Yes, it was about three years ago in September, and it was the saddest day of my life. My mom told my sister and me what had happened and I was devastated. I have never been so heartbroken in my life. The day of my dad dying was so unexpected.

Where was your dad when he passed away?

My mom and dad had gotten divorced about a year before my dad passed, so he was living in Florida with his girlfriend. My sister and I rarely got to see him over that year before he died. My dad randomly had a heart attack in the middle of the night. We knew that heart problems ran in the family but never expected anything to happen to my dad, especially this early.

Do you still think about your dad?

I think about my dad all of the time. Not a day goes by without me thinking of him. I was so close with my dad and I miss all the little talks we had, his advice, and his kindness. He was always there for me when I needed him.

Tell me about the craziest things that's happened in your life?

Craziest thing would be when I decided to take a car trip by myself to Pennsylvania to surprise my boyfriend for New Years. I lied to my mom and said I was spending the weekend at a friend's house. My tire ended up popping halfway there and I had to call my mom and she had to fly down and get me. She wasn't happy, it was a bad experience.

What made you decide to quit Linn-Mar Poms?

The reason I quit Poms wasn't about the people or dancing itself, necessarily, but it was because of the added stress and drama that it added to my already stressful life. And the expectations were so high that I felt like I couldn't get myself to believe I could do it anymore. I also got walking pneumonia on

top of everything and lost all of my stamina. By the time I could get back into it, by then I was just a mess about everything. I decided to let the team have their best shot and finish the season without me.

Are you glad now that you made that decision?

Yes and no. At the time it was the right thing for me and I don't think that I would have made it through if I hadn't made that choice. But looking back, I definitely miss all of the fun aspects of the team and the people. It was a good thing for me to step back and I don't regret it, but I'm definitely glad that I got to experience being a part of it.

Did you feel judged by your teammates, or did you feel supported?

I felt like people said they were supportive and would help but never actually made the effort. Others actually showed no interest and were rude and judgmental.

What made you decide to drop out of school and just take Kirkwood/Online classes?

I had been skipping a ton of school due to my anxiety and lack of self-confidence and I felt like people always talked about me so it made me not want to go anymore and at the end of 2nd semester sophomore year I decided to go talk to my counselor about homeschooling. It seemed like a good option with all the school I had missed and me not wanting to go anymore."

Are you glad now that you made that decision and why?

Yes, I'm glad I made that decision now. I feel like I got ahead and figured out a lot about myself and what I want for my life. Even though I missed out on some high school experiences the experiences I did get were incredible and the traveling that I was able to do was a once in a lifetime experience with my family and for myself. I got a lot out of the extra time I had from homeschooling and I am now very happy with it looking back.

Do you think the online classes were more efficient than in-school classes?

Yes and no. I think that for students who find regular classes easy, it's nice to be able to work ahead and get done with things at a quicker pace. For students who struggle with keeping up, they are able to go slower and really have time to understand what they are learning. But, I think that it can be really hard for some people to hold themselves accountable and actually do the work. For others, the interaction with the teacher is critical for understanding and feeling confident with what they are doing.

Pura Vida colorful bracelets popular among high school teens

By Sydney Bennett

Pura Vida means pure life in Spanish, meaning to live life to the fullest. Pura Vida is a company founded by Griffin Thall and Paul Goodman in 2010. The company makes multiple styles of rings, necklaces, and bracelets. The founders crossed paths with two bracelet artisans named Jorge and Joaquin. Pura Vida is mostly known for the making of their colorful bracelets. The bracelets can be described as colorful pieces of string tied together and made to fit any size wrist, with an adjustable string to change the size. Bracelets can feature up to six colors or can be a single color with a little charm with a P on it, which stands for Pura Vida.

Griffin and Paul first wanted to see how popular the bracelets would be so they placed a bowl of the bracelets in a local boutique. Within days the bracelets were sold out and everyone was asking for more.

Every single bracelet is connected with some sort of charity or awareness, like depression, disaster relief, abalone obsession, save the turtles and many more. When consumers buy a bracelet the money is donated to the charity it is connected with. Griffin and Paul have partnered with over 190 different charities around the world and have donated more than \$1,500,000 to causes they believe in.

“It was more than just an ordinary friendship bracelet... it was a movement symbolizing the simple things in life,” says the Pura Vida website. Bracelets run from \$5 for the simple threaded ones up to \$24 for bracelets with beads or for bracelets that feature thicker, braided string.

Donating money to charity for each bracelet sold has always been a Pura Vida promise because giving back has always been a core belief

at Pura Vida, which is why they started the charity collection. Each purchase also helps provide full-time jobs for artisans around the world.

There is one store in the United States located in La Jolla, California. Many of the bracelets and other collections are sold online at Pura Vida. Online, there is an option called the Monthly Club. It's where consumers get a pack of as-

sorted bracelets having to do with the month or season. For example, if September was your birthday month, you would get colored bracelets having to do with fall and a bracelet with your birthstone. There's also a collection called the Friendship Pack and it has every bracelet in the collection at the time for \$45. These bracelets are able to be dressed up or down and can change a life through awareness and beneficial contributions to a cause.



Emma Westfall always finds a way to spread positivity

By Lauren Klahn

Think of someone who you can always be sure to find with the biggest smile on their face in the hallways or at sporting events when she is cheering. Linn-Mar senior Emma Westfall is that person; no matter what kind of day she is having she always finds a way to spread her positivity. As we sit eating our grilled cheese sandwiches at Java Creek, we talk about everything.

“She is so kind and lovely and just a wonderful person who will love you unconditionally and support you in your times of need, but is also a person with whom you can have endless amounts of fun times and laughs,” says Gabi Martin, senior. Kind, wonderful, and fun: all these things perfectly describe Emma.

What were you involved in as a child? I was in gymnastics for 12 years at CRAG gymnastics.

What advice would you give your younger self if you could? Stop being shy because I used to be quiet and worried about what other people think about me. I am less like that now and I'm happier.

What are you involved in at school? Cheerleading, and that's about it. I was in orchestra for the past three years of high school but decided to quit my senior year.

What is your favorite class you have taken at Linn-Mar? Child Development II. I actually got to teach kids from the elementary schools and I loved it.

What is your favorite memory from Linn-Mar? Probably going to prom my sophomore year because it was just a good group of people. We laughed and danced and smiled a lot. It was a lot of fun.

How do you want people to remember you after you graduate? Besides my dangerously good looks, I want people to think that I was a caring person.

Who is your favorite teacher? Mrs. Brase from middle school because I had her all three years at Oak Ridge and her class was always fun and she actually cared about us and got to know us.

What career do you want to go into when you're older? I want to be an elementary school teacher, 1st grade. I have wanted to be a teacher since I was little, and I love kids. I want to help shape young minds.

What college are you interested in going to? Missouri State. Go bears! I want to go there because it is where my parents went to school and they have a really good elementary education program, which is what I want to do when I grow up.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment? Umm I don't have any (she says laughing). Hold on let me think of one. Getting into college. It's something good that I did.

What is your most embarrassing moment? This year when I was walking into school my skirt got stuck up in my backpack. Yep. I

walked through the whole parking lot with my butt hanging out.

If you could go anywhere tomorrow where would you go? I would go to someplace in South America because I think they have really cool culture and I have never been there. It would also be warm.

Describe yourself using one word. Bubbly

How would your friends describe you in word? Oblivious, I don't always fully think through things. I can be kind of stupid sometimes.

How important is family to you? On like a scale of 1-10? Like an 8. Some of us are closer than others. I'm closer to my mom than my dad.

What is something most people don't know about you? Sometimes I sleep on the ground, when I can't sleep, I sleep on the ground and I sleep better.

What are you grateful for? My dog, she can always make me smile.

If you could change a past event in your life, would you? I don't think I would because even the bad things that have happened I have learned from.

Who inspires you most? My mom inspires me most because she is just a good person and I want to be like her when I grow up.

What is the best life lesson you have learned? To know when it is time to end a relationship with someone.



What is your biggest pet peeve? Being late or when people are late, It drives me nuts.

If you had one superpower what would it be? The power to run really, really fast because it would be a cool party trick.

Quick Favorites:

Color? Purple

Food? Cheese Pizza

Song? It's Still Rock and Roll To Me by Billy Joel

Movie? Mamma Mia!

TV Show? Dr. Phil

Place? Barnes and Noble

Holiday? 4th of July

Animal? Dwarf hamsters

Store? Von Maur

Restaurant? Cheddar's

Costache known for beauty, smarts, impeccable fashion sense

By Marissa Good

As I waited at the cafe for Linn-Mar junior Jackie Costache to arrive, I was surprised when she walked in only a few minutes to our scheduled interview time. She readily admits that she is typically running late. Jackie arrived wearing a chic light blue dress, with a ruffled navy sweater on top, a typical outfit style for this fashion-savvy girl. Jackie is a very intelligent, mature, and confident person who grew up traveling from place to place due to her father's line of work. While many people might imagine this is as a life of luxury, according to Costache, it had its struggles.

"I think people tend to have a very over-romanticized view of living abroad. And yes, it's amazing, and I've experienced so many cultures and diversity, and I'm eternally grateful for that, even though it sounds cheesy, but it has definitely not been easy either," she said.

Jacqueline Costache, or Jackie, as her friends call her, was born in Canada and lived there until the age of six. Then, due to her father's work, the family moved to Japan and lived there for five years. The Costache children went to an international school and were able to meet people not only from Japan, but from all over the world like Australia, England, and Spain. They were also able to travel to many Asian countries during their stay in Japan.

"I definitely love international schools and their community around them because everyone is like a family who has been plopped down in this foreign country. So people are very welcoming since we all know what it's like to go through that change of being detached from your home. You get really close friends. I also love Japanese culture. I think it's just so different from here. It's a country that really values respect and you see that in all aspects. It's extremely safe, people are kind to each other, and it is clean. You see preschoolers riding the bus or the subway by themselves every day. You could leave your wallet on the bus and you could find it there the next day. It'd still be there with all the money in it. So it's just a really great place to grow up."

Jackie and her family then moved to Italy and lived there for about two years. They went to an international school there as well, and found another welcoming community. They were also able to travel to many European countries during their stay in Italy. After Italy, they moved back to Canada for just a semester when Jackie was in middle school.

"I loved that semester. It was really great to reconnect with all

those friends. Those are friends that I know I'm going to have forever. Lifetime friends. I still go and visit them once a year when we go to Canada."

Finally, the family came to Iowa in the middle of Jackie's seventh grade year. It was her first time going to a public school, which was somewhat intimidating since the school was so much bigger than her past experiences.

"The largest school I went to before Linn-Mar maybe had under 500 people from k-12 and here I had 500 people in my grade alone. It was definitely intimidating, but I never felt out of place or I just made do because of moving around so much. I've become really flexible and easy to transition. None of the moves were ever too hard on me. I guess it's always hard leaving your friends behind, and having to make new friends and knowing although you always say you're going to stay in touch, it's hard to when you have different time zones and you just don't see them every day. But I think I always took it pretty well."

Because of all these travels, the Costache family is very close, and Jackie considers family to be one of the most important aspects in her life. Her parents are both role models for her in all aspects of her life and her older sister is her best friend. They do everything together, even work and volunteering.

Her sister, Abby Costache, says, "Jackie and I are super close. She's my best friend and we talk about anything and everything."

Although many kids are annoyed by their younger siblings, Jackie loves her two younger brothers as well and considers them to be very mature and sweet.

"We all really respect each other in my family. We kids have always been pretty mature and our parents treat us with respect and want the best for us. We respect them, too."

Some fun Costache family traditions that Jackie loves include family pizza night on Fridays, and making crepes and having a family prayer on Sunday nights.

"I love it because we get to check in with each other as well as reset and get ready for the week."

Jackie is a very busy person who doesn't have much time to relax. She gets out of school at 1:50 every day and takes a sign language class at Kirkwood on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The other days of the week she goes straight to work at one of the following jobs: Old Navy, babysitting for a family, or volunteering at a Montessori school in Marion. Jackie is also a head stylist for magazine club and a member of Model UN.

Another unique interest of hers is

the love of fashion.

"I like it because it allows you to express yourself and portray yourself without having to open your mouth. And I think it's fun and genuinely enjoy picking outfits and buying new clothes."

Jackie comes from a line of fashionable women including her mother and grandmother, and has loved fashion since she was a little girl. She was also able to get a fashion internship this past summer at Written Apparel in Cedar Rapids, a company that specializes in pencil skirts.

"I liked just being able to work with other women who aren't just into fashion but they're entrepreneurs. And also being able to wear cute clothes that I can't wear to school."

Surprisingly, however, Jackie is not planning on pursuing a career in fashion.

"I don't really like the environment. I think it's sleazy and cutthroat, and I don't really want that in my life. I want to work in foreign relations or in law or in administrative things in schools."

Jackie plans on doing something for a career that will make a difference, but says she will still always love fashion. Whatever she does, with her talent, hard work and determination, she is sure to be successful.

Netflix changes viewing habits

By Holly Baird

With over 150 original titles of both movies and television shows, Netflix is the world's 10th-largest internet company based on revenue. Netflix was started 20 years ago by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph. Netflix's main purpose is streaming media and video-on-demand. In 2013, Netflix expanded into film and television production, as well as online distribution. Netflix serves over 190 countries, and has 109.25 million subscribers as of October, 2017. In 2016 alone, Netflix revenue brought in \$8.83 billion dollars. Netflix offers a 1 month free trial and then charges \$8.99 a month.

In August of 2004, Blockbuster and Netflix got into a pricing war in attempts to woo the most customers. Netflix won this competition and Blockbuster soon closed its shops nationwide. After a couple of years, Redbox, Amazon.com, Curiosity Stream and Hulu Plus all became competitors of Netflix, each trying to gain customers through programming and sales deals.

Although Netflix seems to be leading in this battle for viewers, it hasn't been all smooth sailing for the company. Netflix has been sued a handful of times for false advertising, breaking contracts and even copyright lawsuits. Netflix

Other Fun facts about Jackie:

Favorite food- Thick crust pizza

Favorite color- Purple

Guilty pleasure- Pastries

Countries visited- 21

Favorite place visited- Austria

Wants to visit- South Africa

Favorite brands- Zara and H&M

Favorite trend of the season-

Newsboy caps

Fashion idol- Audrey Hepburn



has also had to raise prices over the years, which has angered some.

The rise of Netflix has altered and reformed the way people are watching television. More people are streaming content rather than renting a "hard copy" of a movie. One advantage to Netflix is no more pesky late charges for forgetting to take back a movie.

One thing Netflix is not phasing out is people going to see movies in an actual movie theatre. According to Tim Richards, CEO of leading U.K. movie theater chain Vue Cinemas, "Our competition is not Netflix." When Netflix first began catching on, everyone predicted that movie theaters would lose business, but the only thing running movie theaters out of business seems to be bad movies. When movie studios produce movies that people want to see, such as 2015's record-breaking *Star Wars Episode VII* or 2017's *Wonder Woman*, people flocked to the theatres in amazing numbers.

According to movie producer Richard Gelfond, competition between Netflix and movie cinemas is minimal. "Consumers can either chain themselves to the couch or go out and see a blockbuster that's delivered with up-to-date technology, great picture quality and surround-sound."

The invention of all things pumpkin spice

By Holly Baird

Picture this, it is fall in Seattle and Peter Dukes is sitting around in the Starbucks Headquarters eating pumpkin pie and drinking coffee. He begins talking with friends about a new drink that he wants to create and the Pumpkin Spice Latte is born in America. Since the creation of the Pumpkin Spice Latte, over 200 million drinks have been sold since their debut. The original drink name was supposed to be FHL, which stands for Fall Harvest Latte but Pumpkin Spice Latte is said to flow off the tongue better. PSL drinks have become so famous around America that it has become a \$361 million operation.

The Pumpkin Spice Latte is widely known throughout many cities, states and countries. "It is fall in a cup! Warm, cozy and good of course" says Hannah Fitzpatrick. It has been said that in 2017, the creators added a new ingredient, real pumpkin puree, to the drink. While many people rave over the drink, it's not universally loved. Some coffee drinkers feel it is just another marketing ploy to sell more lattes.

In a Linn-Mar High School poll, students were asked whether the Pumpkin Spice Latte was good or gross. Sixty four percent of those polled thought the drink was gross while only a 39 percent actually said it was good to drink.

Senior Emily Pistulka said "I think the Pumpkin Spice Latte is my favorite fall drink, it doesn't taste so much like coffee, but is good in a sweet way." People are hyped about this drink and Starbucks is hyped as well, because the drink is racking up sales. Pumpkin Spice drinkers rack up an average of \$1.14 more in sales than a regular order because they are more likely to buy other items. For example, Pistulka says that she usually buys a cake pop with her latte.

Starbucks has enjoyed such success with their pumpkin spice drink that many other companies are following in their shoes and experimenting with different products. M&M's recently introduced white pumpkin pie candies, and Ben & Jerry's added a pumpkin cheesecake ice cream flavor. There are now Milano pumpkin pie flavored cookies, pumpkin spice cereal and pumpkin spice Oreo's. Think the craze has gone too far? Hardly. There is also pumpkin spice kool aid, pumpkin spice sausage, pumpkin spice Pringles, and pumpkin spice layered gum. All of these items are seasonal so they will be gone before you

know it. Whether they come back next season is the real question.

Meanwhile the pumpkin spice craze has its own Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook account with over 114.8K followers. Pumpkin spice flavoring is easily bringing in huge amounts of revenue to a variety of products.

Even though Starbucks is already a 19.16 billion dollar company, they are still getting massive amounts of recognition and attention for this seasonal product.

Trent Buglewicz, choir teacher, said "(Pumpkin Spice is) the most

exquisite flavor man has ever tasted." He says he enjoys this drink

because all the spices come together and just have a great overall flavor.



Starbucks versus Dunkin Donuts in coffee wars

By Emily Pistulka

There's no doubt that people all around the world love coffee. According to *Huffpost*, "Americans consume 400 million cups of coffee per day, equivalent to 146 billion cups of coffee per year, making the United States the leading consumer of coffee in the world."

A large coffee debate is whether Starbucks Coffee, or Dunkin Donuts coffee is better.

According to Maddie Kerr, a junior at Linn Mar High School, "I prefer Starbucks over Dunkin Donuts coffee, it tastes much better. My favorite drink from Starbucks is a caramel macchiato, and I go to Starbucks at least five times a week."

According to Katie Frazier, junior, "I would rather have Starbucks over Dunkin Donuts any day because the taste is worth the price. The Starbucks atmosphere is also much more enjoyable. My favorite drink from Starbucks is an iced caramel latte, and I go to Starbucks at least once a day, often twice."

Senior Kelly Johnston has a different opinion.

"I prefer to get my coffee from Dunkin Donuts because it's cheaper and tastes the same to me. They also have quicker service. I get a French vanilla iced coffee, and I go around two times a week."

With more than 24,000 locations worldwide, Starbucks, the American coffee company and coffeehouse is the third-largest fast food restaurant chain according to number of locations in the world. Starbucks was founded in Seattle, Washington in 1971, and now serves millions of customers every day in 70 different countries.

Dunkin Donuts is the seventh-largest food chain restaurant chain with about 11,300 locations in 33 different countries. Dunkin Donuts was founded in Quincy, Massachusetts, in 1950. Dunkin Donuts started out all about

the donuts, but started to put more emphasis on their growing coffee business ever since the late 1990's. On average, Dunkin Donuts sells more than 30 cups of coffee every second.

According to Ryan Downie, reporter for *Investopedia*, "Despite being founded 20 years after Dunkin' Donuts, Starbucks grew aggressively and is a substantially larger company. In 2016, Starbucks generated \$16.8 billion in revenue while Dunkin' Brands reported sales of \$828.9 million."

Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts are two very different, and two very successful marketers. After running a twitter poll with 236 voters, 75% said they prefer Starbucks over Dunkin Donuts. Let's take a look at what separates Starbucks Coffee from Dunkin Donuts Coffee.

With over 87,000 drink combinations, Starbucks has no problem creating new items. There are so many different combinations to try, ranging from just a simple pump of vanilla, raspberry and sugar to ordering straight off the menu.

Starbucks also has what are considered "secret drinks," and there are too many of these drinks to fit all of them on the menu. Some of these secret drinks include the caramel apple Frappuccino, the orange creamsicle Frappuccino, the Nutella Frappuccino, the

mint chocolate chip Frappuccino, the caramel snickerdoodle macchiato, and much more.

According to Jacqueline Kavana, a student at Mount Saint Mary College, "If you have to choose between Dunkin' Donuts or Starbucks to sit down and enjoy your coffee, Starbucks is the place to go. Starbucks is set up to be more open for people to sit down and relax. Dunkin' Donuts is more of a grab-and-go kind of place. One of the places that my friends and I go to when we want to hang out is in Starbucks."

For those who value price over ambiance, Dunkin might be the place for you. Kavana states, "Dunkin' Donuts is cheaper than Starbucks so it wins in this category. Starbucks drinks can be really expensive and sometimes you need to rely on those Starbucks gift cards to get you through these difficult times."

According to Kavana, "If you are in the mood for just a regular cup of coffee, then it depends on your taste of the company's original coffee blend. Starbucks' coffee tends to be very strong while Dunkin Donuts' coffee tends to be more watered down."

Both Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts Coffee have their own pros and cons, but Starbucks seems to be winning the ongoing battle.



Alex and Ani stackable bracelets offer multiple options

By Lauryn Klahn

These days as girls enter rooms you can hear some of them before even seeing them. This is because of the popular Alex and Ani bangle bracelets. Although the bracelets might all look the same because of the style, each charm has a different symbol. The company has become very popular because of their bracelet versatility, price, and the eco-friendly materials used to make each piece of jewelry.

The Alex and Ani website has over 600 bracelets, providing a large variety of choices. The company works to make sure that their product can be worn by anyone and everyone. The bracelets are one size fits all because of the expandable and retractable clasp. The band may look thin, but it is very strong so you can be sure that it won't break. There are also multiple color options to choose from for bands including gold, silver, and rose gold.

When choosing the right bracelets for you or as a gift for someone else, you not only can decide between the gold, silver, and rose gold finishes, but you also have hundreds of different charm options from which to choose. According to Alex and Ani's founder and CEO, Carolyn Rafaelian, "We are connected with each other through signs, symbols, and things that resonate through our core." Since each bracelet is made with a different symbol or special meaning, it is fairly easy to find one to connect with because of the many options.

Besides empowering and connecting with customers who wear the Alex and Ani bracelets and other jewelry, the company has also developed key partnerships with various charities and other companies. According to Alex and Ani, they have partnered with 43 different charities like the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and Best Buddies, just to name a few. When shopping the charity collection of bangle bracelets, 20% of the purchase price will go to the charity that is represented on the charm of the bracelet you have chosen. According to *Racked*, Alex and Ani has created several major partnerships with companies such as the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), National Hockey League (NHL), the United States Army, the Olympics, Disney, and over 60 different colleges. Partnering with all of

these different companies and charities allows for people to show off the charities or teams that they support on the charms of their bangles.

Linn-Mar senior, Raigan Reilly, says, "I love Alex and Ani because all the charms are unique and they can go with any outfit."

Along with the different finish options and hundreds of charms to choose from, Alex and Ani bracelets are also stackable. The stackable feature allows people the option of choosing between wearing silver one day or gold the next, and they can choose which symbols they want to show off on any given day. Because they are also thin, it makes the bracelets easy to stack and pair with any outfit.

The individual charm bangles range from \$28-\$78, including the bangle and the charm attached. Some bracelets come in sets of two or three though, which can mean a price of over \$100.

"I think the prices are reasonable especially for how long they last and how durable they are, and even some of the money goes to charities for specific charms," says Reilly. One of

Alex and Ani's goals is to try and keep prices low so that many can

afford to wear the bracelets while still providing a great looking and durable product to customers.

One way the company keeps the cost of their products down is by using eco-friendly materials to make their jewelry. According to *Sequoit Media*, Alex and Ani makes all of their bracelets from recycled products or vintage materials. All of the bracelets are still produced where the business began, in the Providence, Rhode Island area. The company is always working with local mills and refineries to get material to produce their jewelry from sustainable materials derived from an eco-friendly process

in America, according to *Racked*. Because Alex and Ani produces its products with these types of materials, the cost of the bangles is lower.

Wearing Alex and Ani bracelets can be a fun and meaningful way for people to express themselves through jewelry. They can be layered in a series of bands with a variety of charms or worn as a single bracelet with a symbolic charm. Alex and Ani provides its customers with hundreds of options and styles developed from eco-friendly materials at a reasonable price. The holidays are coming. It's a great time to put them on your wish list!



Check out these stupid state laws

By Holly Baird

Everyone knows about the seat-belt law, that we must yield to pedestrians and that we're required to use turn signals when driving. But I bet no one knows about these old laws that are still on the books and technically, still enforceable although they haven't been enforced in years.

In Alaska you aren't allowed to get drunk in a bar

In Arkansas if you pronounce the state name wrong you could get in trouble with the cops.

In Topeka, Kansas, it's illegal to scream in a haunted house because it is considered a disturbance.

In Alabama, it is illegal to wear a fake mustache that causes laughter in church.

In Connecticut, a pickle cannot be legally considered a pickle unless it bounces.

In Louisiana, you can be fined \$500 if you send a pizza to someone's house without them knowing.

Nebraska says it is illegal for a mother to give her daughter a perm without a state license.

Ohio says you cannot fish while drunk.

It's illegal to sleep in a cheese factory in South Dakota.

In Tennessee, it is illegal to share your Netflix password.

Utah says it is illegal to not drink milk.

Virginia says it is illegal for children to go trick-or-treating.

In Arizona, you cannot spit in public.

In Georgia, you cannot eat fried chicken with utensils.

Now, lest you think Iowa has escaped this "dumb law" problem, rest assured, it has not. In Iowa:

Kisses may last for no more than five minutes.

A man with a moustache may never kiss a woman in public.

In Cedar Rapids, it is illegal to read someone's palm within city limits.

In some Iowa cities, it is illegal for liquor stores to place advertisements for beer outside the store.

The fire department is required to practice fire fighting for fifteen minutes before attending a fire.

And, one must obtain written permission from the City Council before throwing bricks into a highway.

Now these are some dumb laws. Guess Iowa didn't want to feel left out.

Awkward moments embarrassing but often bring laughs

By Marissa Good

Everyone has experienced those awkward moments that he or she just wishes could be taken back. For example, thinking someone was waving at you, when they were actually waving at the person behind you, or when someone says, “happy birthday” and you reply with, “thanks, you too”. Many Linn-Mar students have experienced their own painfully awkward moments like these.

A common situation people suffer through is making a weird or embarrassing noise during a quiet moment. Junior Anna Kimball can relate to this experience.

“So one time we were taking a test in class, and I flipped the pencil to get to the eraser, but the pencil flew out of my hand. I was in the back of the class and it flew up all the way to hit the front wall, and then I had to awkwardly walk up there to get it.”

Junior Paul Kahler said, “I laugh out loud about funny things in my head a little bit too often, and it’s annoying and embarrassing.”

Another awkward moment is thinking a friend is walking by, and so you wave or say ‘hi’ to the person, but then realize it is actually a complete stranger. Junior Kevin Drahos had a similar experience.

“Freshman year I was walking out of my religious ed. class at night and looking for my mom’s car in the lineup, and it was pretty dark. I eventually found my mom’s car and saw that the driver had brown wavy hair like my mom, but was facing the other way. I opened the car door, sat down, and go, ‘Hey Mom! I am so excited to get home and watch the new episode of American Horror Story!’ and this woman turns around and it’s not my mom, and I’m just chill’n in her car, buckling my seatbelt. So I quickly said ‘Sorry’ and got out. Funny thing is, that my mom was legit one car ahead of the one I accidentally got into.”

Another time, a Linn-Mar student mistook strangers for her teammates.

“One time I accidentally cheered for the wrong team at a cross country meet,” said junior A.J. Kendrick. “It was so embarrassing.”

The opposite mistake is also common, where people talk about someone and don’t realize that the person they are talking about is nearby.

Junior Erin O’Hara said, “A lot of times I talk about people and don’t realize they are right there. It’s the worst when you’re talking about how bad class was that day, and then your teacher walks up.”

Social media and technology have made for many new awkward mistakes as well, such as sending the wrong person a message.

Brooke Mease, senior, said, “One time I meant to send one group chat a message saying they could come over, but I sent it to the wrong group chat.”

Junior Michala Miller said, “I have accidentally liked someone’s really old photo before, which is super embarrassing. And before people knew about the screenshot notification on Snapchat, I think every-

one had that awkward situation too.”

Another common moment is when a high five is rejected.

Taylor Turner, junior, said, “Not getting a high five back is really sad because most of the time, the person you’re trying to high five doesn’t even know that you tried, so you’re awkwardly standing there with your hand up. I don’t know what’s more embarrassing, slowly putting your hand down or having to get their attention so they can high five you back.”

And, of course, there’s the clas-

sic shuffle when someone is going the opposite direction in the hall, and one must try to weave around.

“The worst is when you run into someone, but you both choose the same direction to go around, and you then try to go around the other way, but you keep choosing the same direction over and over,” said Junior Cailin Duffy.

Unfortunately, awkward moments will never disappear. However, if one can learn to laugh about them, those awkward moments won’t seem quite as awkward.

Mather likes working out and being involved

By Sydney Bennett

Meghan Mather, a 17-year-old Linn-Mar junior, lives in Robins with her parents, Mark and Chris. Her parents are both pharmacists and have been married for 22 years. Meghan also has two brothers, Michael and Matthew, who are both off at college at the University of Iowa and Iowa State.

“Even though they mess with me when they are home, I still miss them a lot,” says Meghan.

Meghan wants to go to University of Iowa like her brother, Matthew. Currently, she

volunteers at St. Luke’s Hospital attending to patient needs of all ages by delivering lunch and by playing games with the patients on the neurology floor. Meghan enjoys watching *Grey’s Anatomy* and she says “it’s such a cool experience seeing real doctors and real patients, unlike just watching them on a TV.”

Meghan has a boyfriend, Mason, who is also a junior at Linn Mar, and they have been dating for about three months. They enjoy watching some of their favorite movies, such as *Moana* and *Titanic*, or watching some of Meghan’s favorite shows, such as *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Criminal Minds*, and *Friends*.

“*Friends* is the only show that actually makes me laugh,” says Meghan. She and Mason also do certain activities to check things off of their bucket list they made when they first started dating.

Meghan enjoys running track, preferably 200’s, and she says “It’s the best way to relieve stress, in my opinion.” She has attended both the state track meet and the Drake Relays and said it was a memorable experience and she can’t wait to possibly go again.

She loves working out at IGym, and shopping at some of her favorite stores like Ulta, for makeup; Scheels for the only things she enjoys wearing, which is athletic clothes; and Target for about anything. She also enjoys watching makeup

tutorials on YouTube.

Meghan’s favorite place to eat is Oyama because it is fast, cheap, and delicious. Meghan also likes Starbucks and says she normally walks into school at least 3 out of the 5 days of the week with Starbucks.

“It depends on the weather on what I want but I normally get a soy white chocolate mocha, iced in the summer and warm in the winter. If I’m not feeling coffee I get a Pink Drink.”

She says her favorite seasons are fall and summer.

In fall, she says “I love all of the pretty colors of the leaves and mostly all the pumpkins and pumpkin flavored things.” In summer she enjoys taking a yearly trip to Las Vegas with her brothers and parents.

“There’s a lot of pretty things to look at and I absolutely love the Vegas shows.”

Another favorite trip of hers is driving down to Wrigley Field to watch her favorite baseball team, the Cubs, play.

“I love watching baseball because the players are so hot, considering I’m dating one.”

She also likes to hang out with her boyfriend and go to the pool with her best friends and sun tan all day while listening to some good music. Some of her favorite types of music are pop, rap and country. She likes Thomas Rhett and 21 Savage.

Meghan describes herself as sporty and runs about four times a week. She says she is calm in certain situations and quiet in others, unless you are her close friends, with whom she is very outgoing and herself around. She is intelligent, currently boasting a 4.0 GPA and she says she is very organized with not a single piece of clothing, or silverware anywhere in her room.

“Sometimes when I’m bored I just clean the house for my parents because I guess they are okay with a dirty house, but I am not”.

Even though she is a runner, one



of her bad habits is eating unhealthy, such as one of her favorite foods, burrito bowls from Chipotle. Another bad habit is biting her nails and fingers.

“I automatically bite my nails if I am nervous, even if I am nervous about the littlest things. It is just a bad habit of mine.”

One thing that really grinds her gears is when people crack their knuckles. She hates the popping sounds and she says it makes her cringe. She also hates when she has to repeat herself when she is talking to someone.

“I wish people would just listen the first time when I talk.”

ATTENTION:
Have a story idea for the school newspaper? Know anyone who should be featured for their talents? Submit ideas or writing to Dee Wesbrook in Room I210

Rohingya refugees suffer from world indifference

By Kirsten Lancaster

"I had to save my other children," Arafa, a Rohingya refugee, told *TIME Magazine* as her remaining five children sit around her. "We had to escape Burma. They burned everything." She is referring to Burmese militants that had stormed her village and set it ablaze. One of Arafa's own children became one of the many casualties that night after he was thrown into the flames and burned alive by soldiers. He was only 8 years old. This story is horrific by itself but it is made even more so by the fact that it is not an anomaly.

According to UNICEF, in the past month more than half a million Rohingya refugees have fled Burma to escape the genocide occurring there, 60% of those refugees being children. Although this systematic killing, raping, and vandalizing has been known about for years, America, along with many other powerful countries has done little to nothing to help. This is unacceptable. As the most powerful nation in the world, it is the duty of the United States and its citizens to stand up against genocide no matter what the cost. The ability to enact change is in the hands of the people. It is up to everyday citizens to let Congress know that our involvement in world peace is non-negotiable and that if politicians want a seat representing their constituents, they need get to work on ending the systematic murders of the Rohingya people.

In order to properly defend the Rohingya, it is important to learn who they are. The Rohingya are the Muslim minority in the primarily Buddhist country of Burma, also known as Malaysia. Although the majority of Rohingya can trace their roots back to Arab traders from hundreds of year ago, the government still considers them illegal immigrants and therefore does not grant them the rights that come with citizenship. They are considered one of the most persecuted ethnic groups in the world yet the majority of Americans don't even know they exist.

This is one of the most frustrating obstacles in ending the genocide. Although your typical high school student can give you the latest update on Kim Kardashian's new hair color or the release date of Taylor Swift's newest album, it is rare that you will find someone that has any knowledge of the Rohingya crisis. But this is not completely their fault. The blame falls partially

on the news media. Other than the quick fifteen second clip you may see during a slow news cycle, any coverage over the atrocities occurring just across the ocean is hard to find unless you specifically dig for it. For example, the harrowing story that was told at the beginning of this article happened all the way back in December of 2016, almost a year ago. It was buried under news stories like the NFL kneeling controversy and Trump's golfing excursions. And although it is important to keep up to date with those stories, the Rohingya continue to be murdered, raped, and burned alive while consumers continue to worry about things that have very little significance in the big scheme of things.

Another obstacle that is difficult to overcome is indifference. A 2011 study conducted by Funeralwise found that number of death scenes on television has increased significantly in recent years. In their study of 40 different television shows, the number of deaths averaged around three per episode. This is 12 percent higher than the previous year. Seeing death scenes or portrayals of dead bodies doesn't shock anyone anymore. And in the news, it is easy to find graphic pictures of victims after mass shootings, natural disasters, or bombings. Although it may initially shock the viewer, the effect soon wears off as the picture is pulled away and weight loss commercials take their place on the screen. The same problem happens when people are shown photos of the burned bodies of the refugees. While disturbing, those pictures feel a million miles away, too far away to do anything about. This indifference gives politicians an easy out. So far, no politician has been held accountable by their constituents over their response to the Rohingya genocide. And although our government has offered money to help battle the costs of incoming refugees to Bangladesh, it is only a drop in the bucket for what is really needed. The Rohingya need protection from the people that want to cleanse their entire ethnic group. There is no way for them to fight back against an entire country of people that wish them dead unless others step in to help.

There are some, however, that believe America has no business interfering in this matter. Why should the U.S. spend its resources on a people that live across the world with no real ties to

this country? This "America first" attitude will only end in tragedy. By ignoring the atrocities that are being committed against fellow human beings, America is telling the whole world that it tolerates genocide. It tolerates murder and rape. It tolerates burning an 8-year-old child alive.

America and its people need to wake up. Indifference is an excuse that is killing thousands of innocent men, women, and children. The citizens of this

country have more power than they know. Whether it's contacting a local representative, donating to refugee camps in Bangladesh, or personally volunteering, there are so many ways to help. While the Rohingya may be helpless against their situation, you are not and you can help.

Ways to Donate

UNICEF USA

UNHCR- UN Refugee Agency

Islamic Relief USA

Nuclear worries abound

By Kirsten Lancaster

As of September 12th, the UN unanimously passed new sanctions on North Korea after the country launched its sixth missile test. The sanctions ban textile exports from the country and also limit imports of crude oil. This is the toughest sanction ever passed against North Korea leaving North Korean officials furious.

According to BBC News, North Korea's ambassador to the UN, Han Tae Song, told conference attendees in Geneva, "The forthcoming measures by the DPRK [Democratic Republic of Korea] will make the U.S. suffer the greatest pain it has ever experienced in its history."

This threat follows a long line of comments between U.S. and North Korean leadership. Tensions are high not only because of heated comments but also the worrisome news that North Korea has now tested a hydrogen bomb.

According to The Washington Post, Air Force General John Hyten said, "It (the testing of nuclear and hydrogen weapons) is significantly of concern not just to Strategic Command, but to everyone in the free world."

Alexa Gormley, senior, said, "I am afraid of North Korea now that they have the technology to send missiles to America." She says she also fears that US leaders may be too quick to action. "I am anti-war so I don't want to see a war with North Korea. I think we need more diplomacy," said Gormley.

Luke Moes, senior, disagrees. "When I look at Israel and their anti-missile defense system, it really makes me feel confident in any first world country's ability to fend off a nuclear attack. I don't feel threatened by North Korea at the moment."

Mrs. Allison Borchers, AP World History teacher, looks at the situation from a historical point of view.

Borchers says, "Something we need to keep in mind is that the U.S. is the only country to ever use nuclear weapons. In hindsight, we see their destruction and see that they should not be used but you also have to see that war would have dragged on if the bombs were not used."

She believes that in the current situation, it all comes down to the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un.

"You have a leader that was never supposed to be in power. He is the younger son but his older brother was deemed inappropriate (to rule) because of his attachment to western ideas. So the people may not agree with him but they can't go against him. I think you also have to take into account his mental health. It all depends on the guy holding the trigger, so is he willing to do what he says if he's having a bad day? I don't know, but I think right now all they're doing is flexing their muscles."

The strained relationship between the U.S. and North Korea is not new. At the close of World War II, The Soviet Union controlled the North while U.S. troops occupied the South. Power then fell to Kim II-sung, the leader of The Democratic People's Republic of North Korea. In 1950, South Korea declared independence from his regime sparking the start of the Korean War. While the US and the UN backed the South, communist China joined the North. The clash between these powers led to the deaths of over 2.5 million people. Although the war ended in 1953, hostility remains between the U.S. and North Korea.

Now that both powers have nuclear capabilities it is up to our world leaders to maintain peace. Whether that means passing more sanctions or taking more drastic measures, the world will just have to watch and see.

Kneeling during anthem disrespectful to country

By Lauryn Klahn

Kneeling during the national anthem is extremely disrespectful. What started as a protest by San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, has grown into a protest from dozens of players from various NFL teams. It is unclear if the protest is still about police brutality and racial oppression or if it has transferred to being about a dislike for President Donald Trump. Regardless of the reason, players should be made to stand during the national anthem because it represents an important part of our country.

According to *TIME Magazine*, at the end of WWII, the tradition of playing the national anthem before MLB games spread to the NFL. The NFL Commissioner at the time, Elmer Layden, decided that every team should play *The Star-Spanned Banner* at the beginning of each game because we should never forget what it stands for.

Sports Illustrated indicated the NFL rulebook doesn't mention the national anthem, but the game operations manual does. The manual states that all players must be on the sideline while the national anthem is played before every game. While the national anthem is played, all players should be standing, facing the flag, and holding their helmets in their left hand.

The operations manual also mentions that discipline such as fines or suspensions may be a result of failure to follow these guidelines. These rules were in place before Kaepernick began his protest so it's not like it was a surprise that he could have ended up where he is now...a free agent because teams won't sign him.

There have been many problems in society since the time this tradition began. But not any of these issues have changed what the national anthem represents for this country. According to Smithsonian Magazine, Francis Scott Key wrote the national anthem after he had been detained by the British and watched Fort McHenry bombarded during the Battle of Baltimore. He was unsure of the outcome and worried that he would see the Union Jack flying over the fort, but instead he saw the 'Star-Spanned Banner' flying victoriously.

According to his website, John Thune, U.S. Senator for South Dakota, says, "To me, our American Flag is more than cloth and ink. It is a universally recognized symbol that stands for liberty and

freedom. It is the history of our nation, marked by the blood of those who died defending it." The flag is much more than just a piece of flying cloth. It symbolizes so much.

Everyone should be standing during the national anthem because of all our country has gone through to get the freedoms we have today. This moment before sporting events is a time for all Americans to stand together to honor all that the national anthem and flag represent. Just because you don't agree with things that may be happening in our country today does not mean that the national anthem has any less meaning. We all have problems with certain aspects of our country, the playing of our national anthem is not an appropriate time to protest these problems.

We continue to have our freedoms, see our flag waving, and sing the national anthem because men and women have and still are putting their own lives on the line so that we can keep these privileges. It is not right to kneel or stay in a locker room during the national anthem because so many are risking everything just so we are able to have moments like this.

According to Wood TV, Vietnam veteran Lloyd Loper says, "I don't mind them protesting but when you involve the country by disrespecting the flag and the anthem, then I think that's going too far."

What is being protested has nothing to do with the anthem or the flag so kneeling during the playing of the national anthem is an inappropriate time for their protest. Players choosing to kneel during this time are disrespectful to those who have served and continue to serve so that we can fly our flag and sing our anthem proudly.

While there are many that think kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful, there are also many on the opposing side. The topic has divided our country; even veterans have expressed mixed feelings about it. For example, Loper thinks that it's disrespectful to kneel but other veterans are disagreeing with his opinion.

"As a veteran I fought for their right to do that," says U.S. Air Force veteran Rick Cable.

Yes, one of the freedoms our soldiers fight for is our freedom to exercise our First Amendment right. Although it may be disrespectful, the U.S. Constitution gives those that choose to kneel the right to use

their freedom of speech by peacefully protesting, which is exactly what they are doing. The players have every right to take a knee and protest what they believe. There is no denying that their protest has truth to it. We have a problem in this country that needs to be addressed. However, there are appropriate times and places for these players to send their message. The football field

during the playing of our national anthem is not one of those times. The national anthem is a time to stand together and honor all that it represents, not kneel in protest for an unrelated issue. We should be standing proudly for our anthem each time it is played. There is a time and place for protests and how players are choosing to carry out their opinions is extremely disrespectful.

Baseball stadium foul line nets can't be expected to protect all

By Billy Nix

After several fan injuries resulting from foul balls, Major League Baseball has been under fire for not standardizing foul line nets to extend all the way down the foul line. According to *The Washington Post*, several teams have already added extra netting include the Cincinnati Reds, the San Diego Padres, the Seattle Mariners, and the Colorado Rockies.

Many fans agree that the nets should be extended, but not to the extent that many people want. The nets should be extended up to the edge of the dugouts and no farther, as many people like to have the opportunity to catch foul balls.

Many of the cases of injuries could have been avoided if fans had simply heeding the warning signs posted all around the ballparks. These signs say, **"BE ALERT FOR FOUL BALLS AND BATS LEAVING THE PLAYING SURFACE."**

Fans who buy the tickets in areas where balls are most likely to go are putting themselves at risk and need to understand and accept these risks when they decide to sit in these areas. The teams already put up signs around the stadium and print these warnings on tickets to alert fans to potential hazards.

One of the most common reasons that fans get injured in these scenarios is that they are simply not paying attention to the game. There are several videos on news sites and YouTube showing fans getting hit while looking down at their cell phones, eating, or talking to others rather than paying attention to the game in progress. Ballparks and teams should not be held responsible for a person's own negligence.

So why not just extend the nets? According to *USA Today*, season ticket holders fear the extended nets will contribute to obstructed views. In addition to the problem of obstructed views, The MLB Commissioner said the biggest issue is the ability to fit nets to all 30 ballparks as the designs

of each ballpark are different.

The epidemic of foul ball-related injuries has increased in the past few years according to the website *SB Nation*. Many teams increased the length of their nets before the 2016 season to the edge of the dugouts, however, the ballparks where the injuries took place had not installed extended nets.

After about 60 feet, a baseball's velocity decreases to a rough estimate of 80 mph according to *SB Nation*. Extending netting to the edge of dugout is about 70 feet. The velocity of a foul ball at any point after that should be low enough for fans to see and to prepare for taking precautions.

Teams that have not extended the safety netting to the edge of the dugout enables a higher potential for injury as the exit velocity of these foul balls would be much higher. According to *SB Nation*, an average MLB player's exit velocity after a ball is hit is around 110 MPH. This velocity allows only about a second to react to a ball stuck straight at the dugout. This is where all the severe injuries have been suffered.

"Teams will be encouraged to add netting or some sort of protective barrier to shield fans from balls and bats that sometimes go into the stands in all field-level seats between the near ends of both dugouts and within 70 feet of home plate," according to an article on *MLB.com*. The net controversy has expressed a concern and encouraged some good safety options such as extending nets out to 70 feet. This is where net expansion should stop. Fans who want so desperately to have the chance to catch a foul ball from their favorite player will still have the opportunity to do so, and sight lines will not be impeded. There are currently plenty of places to watch the games safely. If people want to sit that close, they are well aware of the dangers that can occur. They have even been warned of these potential dangers by the ballparks. Extending the nets past 70 feet is unnecessary.

Multiple controversies causing divided country

By Emily Mueggenberg

It's no secret that in these modern times, our country is divided. That simple fact seems to be the only thing we can all agree on. Everyone has a strong stance regarding *something* controversial, whether it be abortion, Trump, gun control, global warming, religion, energy, police—the list goes. Even if you try your best to stay out of these boiling waters, everyone's felt the frustration of debating with someone when you're *so obviously right*. Everyone's wondered how could some people even *think* that way or honestly believe *that* nonsense.

Now, how many times have you actually won one of those debates? Has the other person ever took a breath and admitted that you were right after listening to your points? Odds are, it's not likely.

Here's a stance to consider: how many times have *you* stepped back, thought about your opposition's argument, and said, "You're right, I'm sorry. That was a well-constructed argument. Thank you for changing my mind."

Frankly, those moments are few and far between. Yet, it's not like opinions can't change. Many people have flipped between Pro-Life

and Pro-Choice stances, Pro-Trump and Pro-Hillary disagreements, and Conservative and Liberal labels. Nevertheless, the odds of that flip being caused by a heated dispute with your aunt on Facebook as oppose to a person's own personal research and experiences aren't exactly high.

This, shockingly, is all due to a little side-effect of human nature. Or more specifically, confirmation bias. According to SciShow, "Confirmation bias is simply our tendency to more readily and with less scrutiny accept information, anecdotes, and worldviews that confirm our existing beliefs. And again, it is a completely normal thing that every person does. Indeed, trying to convince someone that a previously held belief is incorrect has been proven to actually *increase* their affinity for that idea." So unless you have a bunch of open-minded, level heads in the room—including yours—your chances of swaying any beliefs are pretty slim.

Of course, that doesn't mean that controversial topics aren't worth discussing. People have strong opinions regarding these topics for a reason: they're important. You shouldn't just shrug and refuse to speak up when you feel that giving

your opinion is crucial. It's more of a matter of picking your battles and choosing when to save your breath. As blunt as it sounds, some people really are a lost cause, and there's nothing that you can do to change their mind. The only person that can do that is them.

However, sometimes people don't have an opinion regarding contentious subjects. While that's all well and good—sometimes it gets confusing and waters really are too murky—by refusing to act in favor of either side, you're actually helping one of them. This is where omission bias comes in. "[Omission Bias is] an effect when we judge harmful actions as less moral than harmful inactions, or omissions," says SciShow. "One example of omission bias is one study that framed the choice to vaccinate a child as an action, which made the average parent choose to vaccinate *only* if not vaccinating was *at least* two times more dangerous. . . . Parents report that they'll feel worse if they take an action and it harms their child, than if they don't act and the child is harmed by a failure to act."

Perhaps this is why, according to uselectionatlas.org, Presidential candidate Gary Johnson received

over four million votes (which is roughly 3% of the popular vote), when even Johnson himself said he didn't think he stood a chance. Perhaps people's omission bias (aka their refusal to vote for Trump or Hillary) was what caused Johnson to get the votes that he did.

Unfortunately, unlike other issues, the government can't just pass a law to make omission bias or confirmation bias go away. It's impossible to rid our country of bias, something that is ingrained into our psyche and upbringing. No one is, and ever will be, without any bias.

One thing people can do to lessen their bias effects is to do research and look at respectable sources on both sides of an issue and then make an informed opinion for themselves. Being a bit more receptive couldn't hurt either. Listening to other people is important. They believe what they do for a reason. Perhaps they'll realize that their reason is unjust and be more open-minded towards you, or perhaps you'll realize that their reasoning actually *makes sense*, and you'd be able to empathize with them.

God knows that the world could use more empathy right now.

Standardized tests do nothing to help students improve

By Emily Pistulka

Standardized tests are worthless, and should be abolished. Each year, standardized testing becomes more popular across America. Standardized tests are unfair, and do not demonstrate a student's true ability. The future of students should not be based on standardized test score.

Michelle Obama, former first lady claims, "If my future were determined just by my performance on a standardized test, I wouldn't be here. I guarantee you that."

Standardized test scores do not prove anything. Michelle Obama still achieved great things such as being the first lady, starting national campaigns, and graduating from Harvard, all without scoring very high on standardized tests.

Standardized tests do not value creativity. A person who writes a creative response that does not exactly follow the format, is pegged as giving a wrong response because machines grade these tests. School districts say that standardized tests are used to improve education but standardized tests do not provide any feedback on how to improve performance. Teachers and students

do not even get the scores back until months after the tests are taken. In addition, the testing companies do not provide any instructions on how to improve these test scores.

Obviously, there are a wide range of differences in the people who take standardized tests and these tests don't accommodate these differences. These differences include different cultural backgrounds, different levels in English language proficiency, different learning and thinking styles, different family backgrounds, and different past experiences. Standardized tests do not value diversity, and they treat people as if they are all identical.

Standardized tests favor of those who have socio-economic advantages. Testing companies are a multi-billion dollar a year industry and offer courses and programs that can be taken to help prepare for the test. People with money are able to get special tutors or can pay to take practice tests to improve their scores. People who don't have money and who attend a school in a low socioeconomic area with less funding, do not get the same preparation for the test.

Standardized tests are also taken in an artificial learning environment. The tests are timed, students cannot communicate with students around them, students cannot ask questions, no references or learning devices are allowed, and students do not get the chance to get up and walk around. It is very rare for the real world to look like this. Standardized testing does not prepare students for the real world.

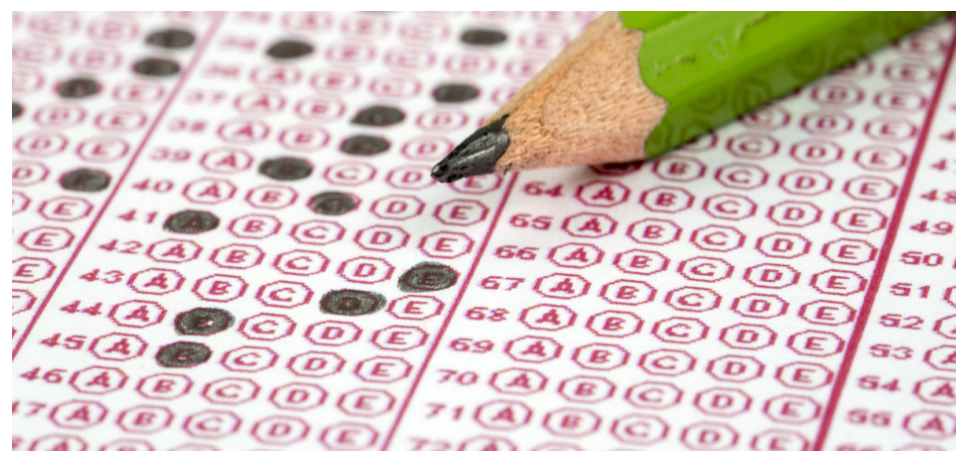
The stress that standardized tests create, negatively impacts certain students. Not all students can test the same under pressure, so there is not a level playing field. When a student is overwhelmed, it is impossible for them to engage in the higher-order thinking process that is necessary for correct responses to

the standardized test questions.

Standardized tests give parents and teachers a false sense of security. When a student scores well on a test, it is assumed they know the material. But, consider that the student may have just simply memorized the facts or the formulas necessary to ensure success. Students may also cheat or take performance drugs in order to do better, because they know that the test score may affect their future lives.

There is so much emphasis placed on standardized test scores nowadays that teachers often spend time "teaching to the test." This might mean that students miss out on learning information that

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Excessive homework doesn't improve grades

By Emily Pistulka

Many students find that a healthy lifestyle is nearly impossible with piles of homework that are often assigned. Students go home after a long stressful day of school and activities and are still forced to complete homework. Homework prevents students from having a balanced lifestyle that enables healthy amounts of sleep and activities to keep them fit and active. It is nearly impossible for students to complete hours of homework, study for tests and quizzes, play sports, have a job, get involved in the community, eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, and have free time all at once. Homework, specifically the amount of homework assigned, has been a hot topic for several years because it affects so many people.

According to *The Washington Post*, "Studies indicate a negative relationship between children's amount of homework and their physical health. Studies have proven that there is no academic benefit to high school homework that consumes more than a modest number of hours each week."

Denise Pope, a researcher at Stanford University, found that "too much homework can negatively affect kids by increasing stress and sleep deprivation and generally leaving less time for family, friends and activities. Homework should not be assigned as a routine practice."

Pope and her colleagues used open-ended answers to explore student views on homework.

They surveyed a sample of 4,317 students from ten high-performing high schools in upper-middle-class California communities and found that "too much homework can diminish its effectiveness and even be counterproductive."

Their study found that too much homework is associated with greater stress, reductions in health, and less time for friends, family, and extracurricular pursuits.

According to the survey data, "56 percent of the students considered homework a primary source of stress, forty three percent viewed tests as a primary stressor, and 33 percent put the pressure to get good grades in that category. Less than 1 percent of the students said that homework was not a stressor."

A majority of students said that their homework load created sleep deprivation and other health problems. Students experience health problems such as headaches, exhaustion, sleep deprivation, weight loss, and stomach problems due to all of their homework.

According to the researchers, both the survey data and student responses show that spending too much time on homework meant that students were "not meeting their developmental needs or cultivating other critical life skills. Students with too much homework were much more likely to end up dropping activities, not see friends or family, and not pursue hobbies they enjoy."

According to the researchers, "The results offer empirical evidence

that the emphasis on testing yielded little learning progress but caused significant harm. The No Child Left Behind legislation demonstrated what happens when tests are misused. Negative consequences included narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test, pushing students out of school, driving teachers out of the profession, and undermining student engagement and school climate. High school graduation tests, used by 25 states, disproportionately penalize low-income and minority students, along with ELL students and the disabled. These tests do not promote the knowledge, skills and habits needed for success in college or skilled work."

People may argue that standardized testing provides parents with a good idea of how their children are doing as compared to students across the country and locally, and that it indicates how their local area is doing compared against the



that many students struggle to find a balance between homework, extracurricular activities, and social time." Students feel forced to choose homework over developing talents or skills.

Kelly Johnson, a senior at Linn Mar High School says, "I think homework is necessary to help students learn in small doses, but excessive amounts deprive students from sleep and stress them out. I could be spending more time with my family and friends if it wasn't for the unnecessary assignments. I have lost many hours of sleep due to lengthy homework assignments."

Morgan Klostermann, senior, says, "Homework causes too much stress along with other activities. I could work more often if I didn't have hours of homework to do each night. I have missed out on several family events due to my homework assignments."

Mrs. Tracy Gettemy, General

Education Assistant at Linn Mar High School, thinks homework is beneficial.

"I think there is some value in homework," says Gettemy, who believes homework must be allowed for the benefit of students.

According to researchers at University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, "It may seem straightforward to many teachers that homework would correlate to a greater retention of the course material, but studies show that the link between assigned homework and academic achievement is drastically overinflated."

Homework causes many problems for students, especially for those who have very involved, including lifestyles. Homework is not necessary most of the time, and in order for students to have the healthy lifestyle they need, homework needs to be limited or banned.

Tests cont. from Page 12

is interesting, useful, compelling, or otherwise favorable to their understanding of the world because there is no point for teachers to teach these things if they are not going to be on the test. Therefore, the possibility of learning new information is shut down.

Standardized tests have become more about administrative, political, and financial purposes; they are not for educational purposes. Test companies gain billions of dollars, and politicians get elected by promising an increase in test results. Administrators receive funding and prevent harsh penalties by boosting test scores. For students, standardized testing is often worthless and it seems that they are the only people that do not benefit from taking them.

According to The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, "A nine-year study by the National Research Council (2011) concluded

national landscape. However, when things such as stress, pressure, and cheating come into the picture, these tests do not give a fair and accurate idea of how their children are doing.

People also may argue that standardized tests are reliable and show accurate measurements of student achievement. But, a 2001 study published by Brookings Institution found that, "50-80% of year-over-year test score improvements were temporary and caused by fluctuations that had nothing to do with long-term changes in learning." Standardized tests are an unreliable measurement of student performance.

People may think that "teaching to the test" is a good practice because it focuses on important content and skills, cuts out time-wasting activities that do not produce learning gains, and motivates students to excel. However, a five-year University of Maryland study

completed in 2007 found that "the pressure teachers were feeling to 'teach to the test' showed declines in teaching higher-order thinking skills and in the amount of time spent on complex assignments.

Standardized testing is not an accurate measurement of a student's ability. There are still different testing opportunities for students, such as performance assessments. Performance assessments give an opportunity for students to actually do something, such as conducting an experiment and presenting its results. Another version of the performance assessment is called the "portfolio." Students can collect examples of work they have done over the course of the year, or even multiple years. An assessment like this is far better than a standardized test for providing data about what students can do, and areas where they might need some extra help. Standardized testing is worthless, and should be abolished.

Feminism necessary until gender equality has been achieved

By Marissa Good

Feminism: the word is seen by many in a negative way. Some uneducated people would say that there is no longer a need for feminism, and that full gender equality has been achieved. While great strides have been accomplished, there is still a long way to go for women all over the world. According to the *New York Times*, in Saudi Arabia, women were just granted the right to drive and obtain driver's licenses without the permission of a male guardian on September 26 of this year. However, this change will not be implemented until June 2018, and Saudi Arabian women are still not granted many other rights that men have. There are still guardianship laws that legally make women minors. According to Feminist Majority Foundation, these guardianship laws were finally addressed by the Saudi Arabian king in April 2017 to allow women to seek services without male permission such as education and healthcare, but did not address every service such as international travel or child custody.

Unfortunately, many other countries have large inequalities between genders, as well. According to U.S. News, in South Korea, women earn a third less than males. In India, women only make up 30% of the workforce and male children are given preferential treatment. Many pregnancies are aborted if the sex of the child is determined to be female. In Indonesia, hundreds of discriminatory laws exist for women, such as a ban on dancing and straddling motorbikes, as well as earning 30% less than their male counterparts. This is one small reason why feminism is still necessary.

Oxford Dictionary defines feminism as "The advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of the equality of the sexes." This advocacy is vital, because there is no country so far that is 100% equal in relation to gender. According to the 2016 World Economic Forum, only five countries have closed 80% of the gender gap or more. North America is not one of those countries, and still has 28% remaining to close, and is ranked 45 of 144 on the 2016 Global Gap Index. This gender gap takes into account economic opportunity, education, political empowerment, workforce participation, and more. A major aspect of the gender equality gap in North America is unequal pay for women. According to the American Association of University Women

(AAUW), women are typically paid 80% of what men are paid as of 2017. At the current rate, the AAUW also predicts that the gap will not close completely until 2119. Women of color are paid even less in relation to men. According to AAUW, African American women are paid 63% of what men are paid and Hispanics are paid 54%.

Another aspect of the gap in America is unequal political participation. As of 2017, according to the Center for American Women and Politics, only 19.6% of Congress members are women, 21% are represented in the Senate, and 19.3% are in the House of Representatives. Even though these female seats are high in comparison to the past, the International Women's Rights Project has projected that women will not achieve 50% of seats for another 100 years. There are also some who maintain that sexism still prevents many women from taking office, and was a contributor to Hillary Clinton's loss in the 2016 presidential election.

According to Mel Robbins, a CNN commentator, "Never in my lifetime has there been more misogyny on display than during the 2016 election. It was disgusting. The biggest offender: Donald Trump. The flat-out derisive language and more subtle "messaging" were so prevalent that we began to accept it."

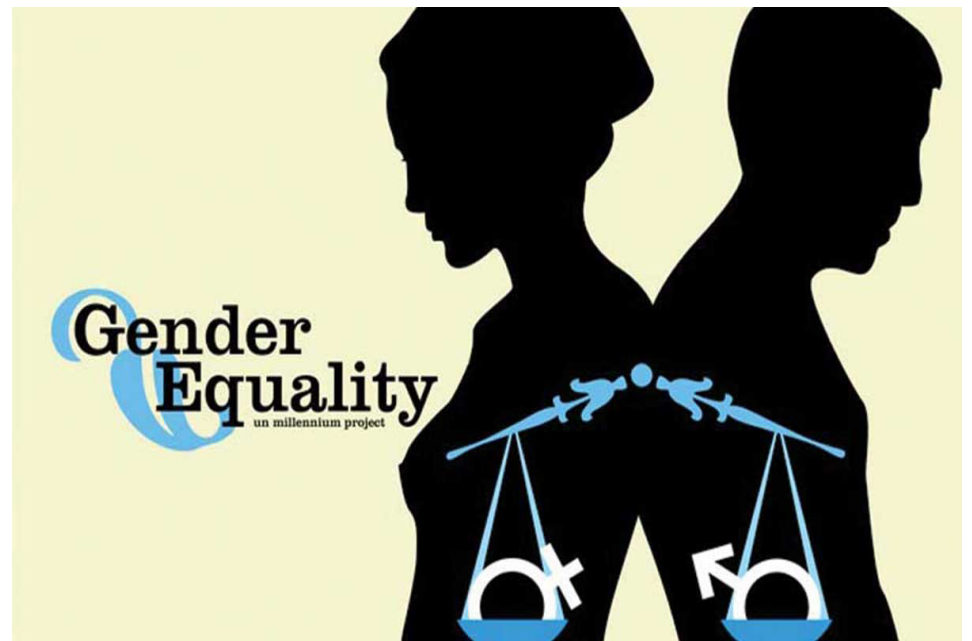
Women also face problems more often than men while campaigning, such as comments about appearance, questions about her personal life, such as being a wife or mother, and questioning of qualifications.

Some say that women tend to choose lower paying jobs than men, which makes the wage gap statistic false, and feminism unnecessary. It is true that more women take lower paying jobs than men, but this fails to take into account that these choices may be made because of barriers women can face. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), a 2016 study by Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn estimates that occupational segregation—where women work in lower paid jobs typically done by women, and men work in higher paying jobs typically done by men—along with segregation by industry and firm, are now responsible for half of the wage gap. This can be caused by the barriers women face according to IWPR, which range from biased information about job prospects, to actual harassment and discrimination in male dominated jobs. Women also deal with

Feminism

Noun \ fem-i-nizm

A BELIEF IN THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY OF THE SEXES



the work-family balance more often than men, due to society's expectations of a working mother, which can result in a woman choosing a lower paying job that has more flexibility. If a world existed in which all jobs had equal numbers of men and women and were non-discriminatory, perhaps these barriers could be eliminated and females might choose differently, resulting in higher pay. However, even when the pay gap is adjusted by researchers to account for what it would be like if jobs had equal numbers of men and women, the gap still amounts to women earning 94.6 cents to every man's dollar, according to *The Atlantic*. This discrimination, and occupational segregation, must be fixed.

Other people might say that feminism is not needed because some feminists take it too far, or are just 'man haters'. Jessica Crispin, author of *Why I'm Not a Feminist* said, "I feel like—and maybe the second wave was the last time that this was true—there used to be an understanding of what the word "feminism" meant. Now it's been used in so many marketing campaigns and to justify so many terrible things—pro-life groups are even using it. Now I could say 'I'm a feminist' and that doesn't necessarily convey anything to you. That word is not going to give you an understanding of where I'm coming from. And so, while I'm a feminist in the sense that I believe in the philosophy, I am not a feminist in that I don't think the word is useful anymore."

There are indeed cases of so called 'feminists' calling all men

evil rapists and promoting the superiority of women, and these people are tarnishing the word feminism. However, this is not what true feminists believe, so people should not dismiss feminism because of a few misguided individuals. Feminism must be continued since there are still many avenues that need to be fixed for men and women to reach equality.

Some measures have been taken to try to close this gender gap and achieve gender equality in the United States, such as the Equal Pay Act of 1965, which abolished wage differences based on sex, as well as the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which protected a woman's right to take action against pay discrimination. However, equality has still not been reached so something must be done to achieve this. There must be pay transparency, which allows women to know if they are being discriminated against. People must also speak out against the gender gap in order educate society and move forward towards equality. Additional legislature must be passed as well, such as the Equal Rights Amendment, which some states have already passed. This would ensure that women are treated equally in all areas of society, including the workforce. The only current law that mentions equality for men and women is the right to vote, according to the Huffington Post. Lastly, both genders must be encouraged to help women succeed in closing the gender gap, because the only way men and women can achieve equality is if everyone fights together, and supports feminism.

“Participation points” are a really stupid idea

By Marissa Good

Do you enjoy participating in class discussions, or is it something you dread? Either way, many classrooms currently have a grading category for participation. Those teachers seem to think that the only way to get students engaged is to add this grade. However, how does one define participation? Currently, participation grading systems tend to favor quantity over quality, and just take spoken comments into account. Oftentimes, this means tallying the number of times a student speaks during class. This is unfair to introverted students that prefer not to participate due to fears of looking foolish in front of classmates, and those who simply learn better by listening. It only adds unneeded stress to many students, and oftentimes costs them when it comes to their grade. It also takes an extra toll on students that are already struggling with their test grades, and prefer not to speak in front of the class, lowering their grades even further.

Participation points typically entail either giving out points to those who raise their hand a certain number of times, or simply giving out meaningless points to everyone in class for doing tasks that are already expected. This falsely inflates student's grades, making this option ineffective as well.

Anusha Gopalam, junior said, “I like participation points when they are easy, but I think it is unnecessary when it's the kind that you must participate a certain number of times.”

According to a 2015 Gallup Student Poll of one million students grades 5-12, only 50% felt that they were engaged in school. The percentage also dropped as the student's age increased, with 41% of freshmen and 34% of seniors saying that they felt engaged. This statistic is alarming, and the main reason many teachers feel the need to implement participation points. However, these participation points rarely do the job that they should. For those who are shy, speaking in front of the class is a nightmare, and with participation points comprising up to 30% of a student's grade in some classes, this is a big deal.

Taylor Turner, junior, said, “I feel adding a participation grade just makes me feel more pressure when I'm speaking and self-conscience. I don't think it actually makes me speak more often since it's scarier when the teacher is paying extra attention to my comments.”

Adding this participation grade oftentimes doesn't increase input from those that weren't speaking up, it just costs the students their grade. School is already stressful enough. According to NBC News, a 2014 American Psychological Association survey found that teen school year stress is far higher than what is healthy, and 31% of students reported feeling overwhelmed with stress. Adding a participation grade increases the already high stress levels of those students that aren't comfortable yet with speaking frequently in front of the class. Therefore, discussion should be highly encouraged, but not required for a grade.

The main reason a teacher chooses to add a participation grade is usually to facilitate discussion, as well as make sure students are engaged.

Junior Emma Geneser said, “In certain classes where discussion is important like social studies and English, I like participation points because it's an easy way to boost my grade, and you get to hear more opinions than you would otherwise.”

Junior Paul Kahler said, “I think participation points are absolutely pointless in a normal class setting. However, if the class is discussion-based, then I believe that they should be used in order to get everyone to participate.”

It makes sense to encourage classroom discussions, and get many perspectives. However, doing this by tallying up the number of times each student speaks does not seem like the best way to do so. One substitute for grading participation is encouraging engagement. According to Faculty Focus, teacher Lolita Paff did this by awarding extra credit engagement tickets which could be used to make up missed homework assignments or add points to an exam. These were given to students for posing thought-provoking questions to the class, emailing questions to the teacher, putting problems on the board, and many other tasks. This way those who chose not to speak were not docked points, but those with extra participation were rewarded, which encouraged classroom engagement. There was also a broad range of activities considered to be participation and engagement, and shy students weren't required to speak in front of the class, but were still engaged and had many options to gain points.

Paff said, “Given the number of office visits, and written and electronic communications about course concepts, more students are demonstrating engagement with this new system than have in previous courses. I'm less clear as to how the system is affecting oral participation. However, it's still happening even though my new approach doesn't emphasize it.”

Teachers may also need to get more creative with their discussion methods. Different types of group discussions such as small groups instead of large, could help many students feel more comfortable participating and voicing their opinions on questions. Another option to substitute the usual large group question and answer approach, is to have students that don't wish to speak their thoughts to the whole class write down their ideas. They

can then hand in their opinions on class discussion topics to the teacher at the end of class in order to show their engagement.

While it is important to build communication skills and apply the material learned in class, adding a grade for participation only adds extra stress to introverted students, and gives those students a grade disadvantage. Some people must put in a lot more effort to build up confidence to speak, and would prefer to lose points than feel that anxiety. There are also students who are still building up their communication skills and don't feel comfortable yet voicing their opinions every day, as well as some students that simply learn better by listening. These students should not be disadvantaged with a grade for participation. After all, if no one is listening, the participation of other students is pointless.

Drunk driving always a “No”

By Sydney Bennett

There is one death every 51 minutes caused by someone who chose to drink and then drive. Going out for drinks with friends is all fun and games until someone takes it too far and crashes a car because they didn't know when to quit drinking. If a person is at a bar or a restaurant and is over-drinking, the server should call a cab or do anything to try and prevent them from driving.

In 2012, 239 child passengers under the age of 15 were killed in drunk driving related crashes representing 20% of all traffic fatalities. In 2014, 9,967 people died because of drunk driving incidents and in 2015, 10,076 people were killed. Twenty eight people in the United States die every day due to drunken driving. Society loses so many people due to dumb decisions made by those who are too intoxicated to drive.

Drinking and driving doesn't just affect the one choosing to drink and drive. Children often are put in the middle and at risk.

“The most traumatic experience I have ever been in is when my dad, my two little sisters, and I were all in a car around 9 PM. We were all leaving my dad's girlfriend's house and he had a little too much to drink and when my dad is drunk, he is very short-tempered. I offered to drive but at the time I only had my permit, and he shut me down right away and said he was fine. I didn't want to ask again because I was scared he would yell at me again. By the time we got home he had run three red lights and had almost

run into four stopped cars until I yelled “Dad” so he would slam on this brakes. Riding in the passenger seat with a drunk person is the scariest thing because they have no clue what they are doing,” said a 16-year-old Linn Mar sophomore.

It is understandable why people who drink too much think they are okay to drive because alcohol interferes with the brain's communication pathways and affects judgement. It's understandable but not excusable. When drinking, alcohol can reach the bloodstream within minutes, which will affect decision making. That's why it is important to designate a driver BEFORE drinking in excess. People who drive with alcohol in their system are putting lives in danger while they are driving.

In Iowa, you are considered too intoxicated to drive if your Blood Alcohol content (BAC) is 0.8 or higher. Yes, drinking can be fun when you are out with friends but driving after drinking is never okay. Call a cab. Call a friend. Designate a sober driver before drinking. Call an Uber. Uber even has an app to download to your phone that allows a private driver to pick someone up from their house, a bar, or anywhere else. In a number of places, Uber has been shown to reduce drunk driving by 25% to 30%, just because of a click of a button.

There are many ways to prevent drunk driving from potentially hurting yourself and others. Make smart decisions and never drive a car after drinking alcohol, no matter the amount.

The Linn-Mar Life

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