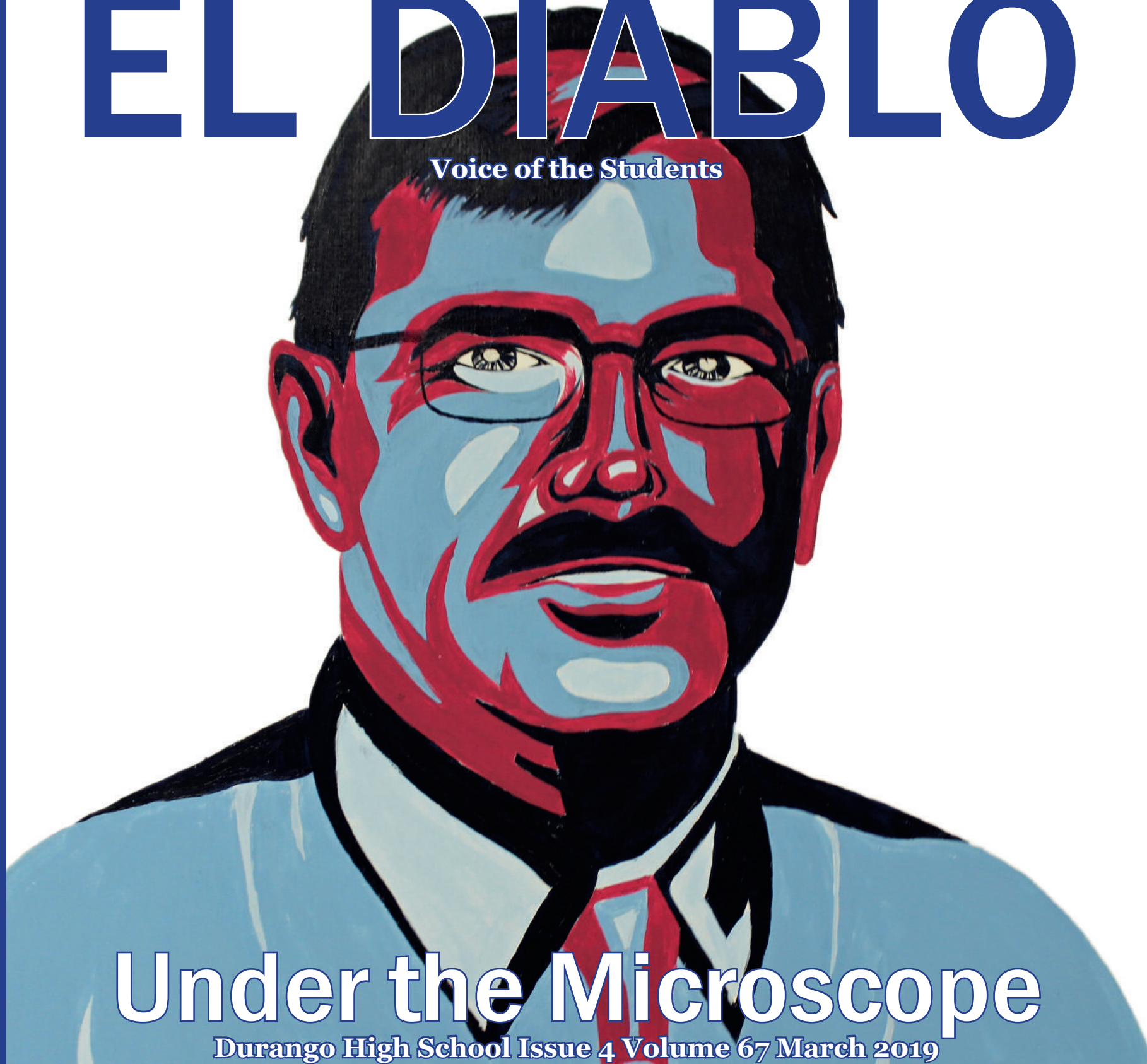


EL DIABLO

Voice of the Students



Under the Microscope

Durango High School Issue 4 Volume 67 March 2019

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Letter from the editors

Dear Reader,

One of the most important jobs of a journalist is to be a watchdog on those in power. We love writing about students, teachers, and the community, and we are so proud when readers are interested and vocal about our content. "Under the Microscope" is a very special issue, and we hope you love reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it. The goal of this issue was to put the policies and decision making of the district under a metaphorical microscope. In this issue, you find stories about our Superintendent, suspension policies, the school board, diversity, as well as DHS student perceptions about our school. We are here for the students. We write for you, and if you have a differing opinion, please write to us and share how you feel. We are only able to be your voice if you speak up. *El Diablo* is for the students and by the students, one hundred percent.

Sincerely,

Emma Jaber, Caroline Knight, & Haley Szczech

Cover art by Bryn Valdez

El Diablo

Voice of the students and official newspaper of Durango High School.

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It costs nothing to be kind **Principal Hoerl**



One of my favorite days of the year (I know this will shock many because it doesn't involve a literacy assessment or that it takes away from instruction) is the DHS Rocks event. This event raised over \$6,500 dollars to take care of our own Demons. I know one of the main impetuses is for students to miss their class on a Friday, but over the years I have seen tremendous acts of kindness emerge from this event. Students have walked up to me and opened up their wallet to empty it out. They hand their money over to me typically with the statement of, "I'd like to donate this money because I know someone needs it more than I do." This has happened each of the past two years of this event. Even more amazing to me is the fact that I know each of the students that have handed over the money earned it working their own jobs to help support themselves and their families. This event is always a stark reminder to me that you never know what someone else is going through and in a world where you can be anything, be KIND! A great reminder for us as Demons, to always be kind to each other and support each other each and every day.

“Dialogue and Discussion” **Durango 9R Superintendent Dan Snowberger**



With the theme of this issue being “Under the Microscope,” I wanted to share some thoughts with you about civility in our world today. I want to be clear, like all other adults, I am far from perfect. There has been some pretty strong criticism of me over the past few months for my mistakes in interactions with members of the media. By all means, I deserve criticism when I make a mistake.

Unfortunately, our society – local, state, and nationally – have shifted into a mode where divisive communication has become the norm. Many people who may disagree with an individual no longer engage in conversations to understand dissimilar views, but instead choose to criticize those perspectives. We see this in politics around our nation today. I remember the day when politicians could disagree, have vigorous debates, and then have dinner or play golf. Today's atmosphere has increasingly become one of attack and destroy when disagreements exist.

You are a generation that can change this tone. I have the utmost faith in each of you and continue to be impressed with your desire to improve our community. I strongly believe that it is through conversation and dialogue that we grow as individuals. When we disagree with someone's point of view, their beliefs, or an action they have taken, refusing to communicate provides no

benefit to either side.

I continue to seek opportunities to hear from all stakeholders in our community through public meetings, personal meetings, and correspondence. I invite you to reach out and be open to two-way dialogue as we work to make our school district the best it can be for you. On Wednesday, April 10th, I am inviting you to join me for lunch at DHS. This will be a great opportunity for you to share your thoughts, ideas, and questions. I hope to see you there.

A word from Todd Jolley, *El Diablo* adviser



El Diablo's “Under the Microscope” issue is our best yet. Across the country, there are stories of administrators censoring, even shuttering, HS journalism programs that are critical of authority. The Colorado Student Free Expression Law guarantees Colorado students the same 1st Amendment Rights as adults, one of only eight states in the country where this is true. However, we thankfully don't even need the law since the administrators wouldn't censor us if they could. Not only do they not censor us, every single high level official in the district - the Superintendent, Principal, all three Assistant Principals, Counselors, Deputy superintendent, Finance Director, & Safety Director, etc. - frequently respond to our requests for interviews.

We are one of top six student publications in the state, and the only small town to rank that high, as our main competitors are schools in Denver, Fort Collins, Cherry Creek, and Colorado Springs. Our outstanding achievement is due to both the journalists' unique, fresh, and well-executed stories, as well as support from authority figures who are willing to be criticized.

I encourage DHS students to consider how relatively well they have it. I grew up impoverished in an isolated part of Wyoming, traveled throughout the developing world, and began my year teaching in Denver at an alternative school for previously suspended students. From my perspective, the Administrators and staff, while far from perfect, work constantly to make Durango 9R a more inviting, rigorous, and safe community. In fact, they continuously stress that they want us to be the top High School in Colorado - a worthy goal in itself, but what does that exactly entail?

I think it means a community that includes and welcomes everyone. It means a world class education that prepares you to think critically and pursue your dreams, to live a life of fulfillment and civic engagement. To achieve this goal is a work in progress - and more importantly, it's a two-way street. Everyone should ask themselves, “am I doing my part to make this the best school it could be?”

El Diablo journalists do amazing, often unrecognized work, mostly behind the scenes. They want to be your voice, but you have to communicate and participate. Just as that's true with DHS and *El Diablo*, it's true with all 9R students, staff, and administrators. If you want it to be heard, speak up! Administrators want what's best for you, and you should absolutely challenge or clarify things with them, but through calm and civil dialogue, not complaints from behind a screen.

Snowberger: the man, the scandal, and the future of DHS

CHLOE RAGSDALE AND JACK WHISTLER
Head Lifestyle Editor and Arts Editor

The community of Durango Colorado is, for the most part, a tight-knit, smalltown feeling place. There is one public school district, two city markets, and one large newspaper which many citizens depend on for their news coverage.

The Durango School District 9R consists of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools, which have been overseen by superintendent Dan Snowberger since 2012. With the relatively affluent citizens of Durango sending their kids to public schools recognized by the Colorado Department of Education in 2017, and the fact that one could run into their dentist or county commissioner at a high school football game or at the Walmart, expands every small issue that 9R administration may face.

The Superintendent of the Durango 9R School District, Mr. Dan Snowberger, has faced recent press coverage by The Durango Herald of several controversial issues that have tainted Durango, and sits down with El Diablo to discuss these subjects and reflect on his performance throughout his term.

Perhaps the most well-known topic that has spread across parents, students, and the pages of The Durango Herald, is the supposedly apparent discrepancies in Mr. Snowberger's resume, where it was said that certain positions that Mr. Snowberger had and the significance of these people were seemingly falsified.

"The district and the search firm did a massive background check on me before I was a candidate. Even the teacher's union looked into my background and experiences prior to coming to the district. For a group of people to claim that I'm dishonest is just sad. I just don't know how to respond to that," says Mr. Snowberger, addressing the lack of "journalistic integrity" surrounding some of the reporters on Durango Herald's staff that amounted to the height of this topic in the community.

According to Mr. Snowberger, reporters from the

Durango Herald left a voicemail giving him four hours to respond to their article focused on the supposed resume fiasco while he was waiting in intensive care with his wife, Olga, who had been involved in a car accident and suffered from severe injuries including fractures in her pelvis before they ran the story.

"So it wasn't like it was a crime that was committed the night before; it was over the thirty-year span of my career, so waiting another day until I could've gotten back to them, or trying some other way... to me, that would've been a fair way of doing it," he comments, bringing light to the seemingly unfair methods of reporting he dealt with.

Another incident that brought out the community was the sexual assault allegation made at Riverview Elementary School, where a parent claimed his son was touched inappropriately by his fellow peer.

Unfortunately, the parent was not comfortable with their child being interviewed by school district or law enforcement agencies.

"When a parent won't allow you to investigate, won't let you talk to their child, it's pretty hard to investigate," claims Mr. Snowberger, addressing the controversy caused by the attempted implementation of Title IX legislation into this case. According to Mr. Snowberger, in a case of sexual assault on a school campus, first the district investigates alongside law enforcement, and if the sexual assault is proven to be true, then Title IX legislation is applied, which gives protection to the victim. However, in this case, the parents of the victim denied access to the child from law enforcement as well.

As stated by AAUW, the American Association of University Women, "schools should have an official, often called a Title IX coordinator, who should be monitoring compliance



with the law and available to students, faculty, and staff, to investigate and respond to incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence.” The question of when Title IX goes into action sparked the controversy at Riverview Elementary, where it’s unclear whether the Title IX coordinator should’ve been involved throughout the entire investigation process, as the parents of the victim argue, or just when it was proven to be a true case of sexual assault, as Mr. Snowberger claims.

Across town from Riverview Elementary another rumpus sparked as the communication director for Durango 9R School District, Julie Popp, who was also a parent of a student at Needham Elementary, was removed from the school with a 911 call by the school’s principal on the grounds of trespassing.

“While the paper reported the individual was banned from school, she had been asked to not come back until a facilitator could be arranged. When the individual came back, she was asked to leave and police were contacted as is our usual procedure in the district,” said Mr. Snowberger, confronting the confusion regarding whether Popp was banned from Needham Elementary or not or not.

“Did something happen? Yes. Because it involved a parent, I chose to deny it,” claims Mr. Snowberger, describing how he handled the Durango Herald when questioned about this issue, but seemingly only adding to the thick controversy.

These notable issues in the Durango Herald’s recent press of Dan Snowberger have caused a sense of confusion to not only the community of Durango but to Mr. Snowberger himself.

“I would say, just personally and professionally, these past few months have been the most challenging in my life,” said Mr. Snowberger.

He addresses the frequent negativity following his name throughout this past year, while also highlighting the Durango 9R School District’s many recent, great achievements, accomplishments that should overshadow his admitted mistakes and deserve more recognition and press coverage. Over this past year, the Durango 9R School District has increased employee wages, making them the highest in the Western Slope in Colorado, as well as increased the transparency of the district’s budget so it’s more accessible to the community.

Many of the positive changes in the district have directly affected Durango High School, where in the seven years since his position, the graduation rate has increased from 70% to 86%, which Snowberger only hopes to increase in the upcoming years. The achievement gap has closed significantly, as Durango is one of the top

districts in the growth of Latino students, biracial students, and students in poverty. New classes have also been introduced to Durango High School since Mr. Snowberger’s reign, such as concurrent enrollment classes, culinary arts classes, engineering classes, and construction trades classes.

Amidst the controversy and the achievements, the 9R School District has many goals for the upcoming year, including how to better deal with the press. “In the future, I’ll be more careful with my words,” says Mr. Snowberger, reflecting on these past few incidents in the press and how events like these can be prevented from happening again.

School Board President Nancy Stubbs also wants to learn from these past mistakes and hopes to increase communication, with both the community and within the district itself.

“We want to have something in every citizen’s mailbox every month,” Stubbs claims, who doesn’t provide specifics of how to achieve this, but includes using the journalism program at Durango High School or increasing things such as coffee meetings or town halls, and encouraging people to come to Board meetings and speak to the Board directly..

Dr. Stubbs, as well as Mr. Snowberger, both ask the student body here at Durango High School and the 9R community to question the media and to find numerous sources in order to genuinely find the truth.

“People jump to conclusions without really knowing the whole story and I guess I just encourage students to reach out. I had a student email me ‘you’re a snake’ and I responded back and I said I’d love to sit down and chat with you, to get to know more about your thoughts and share more, but no response,” says Mr. Snowberger, expressing his frustrations toward the apparent lack of transparency we find in our small community.

The matter truly lies in reaching out and recognizing others as human beings and not purely opponents, as Mr. Snowberger brings light to, as well as encourages members of the community to simply have a conversation in order to better understand one another. This is an important lesson to understand in today’s society, as Mr. Snowberger points out, where the world is in a state of being right or attack, and the idea of listening and grasping for both sides of the story is more essential than ever.

“People jump to conclusions without really knowing the whole story and I guess I just encourage students to reach out. I had a student email me ‘you’re a snake’ and I responded back and I said I’d love to sit down and chat with you, to get to know more about your thoughts and share more, but no response.”

-Dan Snowberger

The full audio version of Snowberger’s interview can be found at eldiablone.com

Why was I suspended?

DHS administration shares why students face repercussions for their actions



Photo credit: Stevi Cameron

STEVI CAMERON
Reporter

Drug use, bullying, and violence: all means for student suspension. The 2018-2019 school year has invoked many questions of what can lead to a student suspension. While many rumors and misunderstandings will always circulate around the disciplinary process, what many students and administrators alike need is some clarity from both the students and the enforcers. This year especially, what influences these processes and is in turn affected have fallen under the DHS microscope.

There are various infractions that a student can exhibit that would call for suspension, the most common being drug use.

“Things that would be considered a crime would be suspendable” said Assistant Principal Darren Tarshis.

Such suspendable actions consist of drug use, drug possession, violence, theft, bullying, and other student misdemeanors. Tarshis, as well as DHS Assistant Principals Brandon Thurston and Amy Swartz, are the first to address the students responsible and walk them through the disciplinary process. Each suspension revolves around its connection to school.

“The word that we use is nexus. We suspend for things that have a nexus to school or a connection to school,” said Tarshis. This includes anything on the way to school, conversations at school, during school hours, or events occurring on school property. For example, plans that originate at school, even if they take place elsewhere, are suspendable. This includes anything taking place over social media if the offender has a relation to school.

Additionally, the role of the assistant principals is to perform a majority of the inquiry into each case.

“We do a full investigation to find out what was actually transpiring, it’s not just assumed guilt,” said Thurston.

There are many aspects that are considered carefully in each case. Every misunderstanding must be unraveled as well as people involved, events of the situation, and its severity. To elaborate, social media and bullying have always been a confusing obstacle to understand.

“If it’s a marijuana offense we can pretty much have it in and out of our office in one day, but sometimes bullying, and especially cyberbullying, can take a few weeks,” said Swartz. Because bullying is so abstract, it is harder to find concrete evidence for it, making it a longer, tougher process to deal with.

The role of each assistant principal is nominally broken up by grade so that Ms. Swartz deals primarily with 9th graders, Mr. Thurston with 10th graders, and Mr. Tarshis with those in 11th and 12th grade. Despite having separate grades, they mostly collaborate through each process.

“Sometimes the lines are a little blurred because we need to be a team. It depends on the situation,” said Swartz.

To ensure punishments are objective to it’s misdemeanor, the assistant principals emphasize the importance of their collaboration.

“We meet multiple times a year to discuss what we believe the consequence needs to be to align with our schools policies for each infraction. We do this ahead of time so that there is a level of consistency,” said Thurston. This way they can work out each point of speculation and solidify each nuanced part of the situation.

“We have that level of communication where we have already discussed the nuances of the situation of disciplinary discussions,” said Thurston. They claim that policies are pretty well set and do not normally change.

However, a thick cloud of rumours circulate the disciplinary course of action and the of the trio of assistant principals.

“We’re bound by privacy laws - and even if we weren’t bound by that, we are bound by our own ethics” said Swartz.

They can’t clarify to the students or the other parents, and the details of each case

are confidential. This allows for rumours to grow as they are often spread through the school from the student in question themselves or their friends.

“We hear the rumour mill all of the time because people have different views of us and what we do” said Thurston. He shares his pride of his work after a successful encounter with the student and their parents but explains how many students don’t perceive it as a success. All they see are the effects and consequences rather than the full process.

“Our job is to work for the students best interest and you all don’t get to see that,” said Tarshis.

Their work is all behind the scenes due to confidentiality. It’s important for students to realize what they are hearing may not be true and they are expected to trust that it is administration’s best interest to maintain a positive environment. One alternative to suspensions is the DHS restorative justice program, which is a part of the counseling department. This works to decrease the amount of school missed through detailed conversations and learning to take responsibility for their actions.

According to the Colorado Department of Education, in the 2017-2018 school year, there were 351 suspensions total at DHS.

Some disagree with the suspension of nonviolent cases, thinking it to be counterproductive to remove students from a learning environment. Though restorative justice has become an option, this issue has been brought to light with the increase of suspensions made from a growth in teen drug abuse.

On the other hand, students have felt that there is more to it than just the overall goal and disagree with the way their case was handled.

Suspended students provided information on their suspensions on their own accord; this information was not given by administrators. So. Baxter Moore felt that his case could have been handled better and felt that the bigger picture could have been analyzed before deciding on a definite punishment, leading to one he felt was slightly exaggerated.

“I understand that precautionary measures need to be taken because it was a threat, but I would say they made a very rash decision,” said Moore.

So. Clara Krull was suspended her freshman year for a drug paraphernalia related case and expresses that she did not think investigations that went into it were thorough enough, believing the punishment was inaccurate for the infraction done.

“I felt that it was unfair because they didn’t have any proof,” said Krull. After all was said and done, she felt that they hadn’t gone deep enough into investigations and hadn’t made the right decision for the disciplinary actions.

Moore explained that he felt there were a few other things that could have been done better throughout the disciplinary process.

“They should have considered it on a case by case basis instead of generalizing it,” said Moore.

Moore explains that he believes administration left out most of the surrounding circumstances because they didn’t talk to the people involved before making assumptions, in addition to considering the events around school that would be affected due to his absence.

“I just wish they had told me what was going on. I didn’t really have any information through the whole process,” said Krull.

She explained that throughout the process she was in the dark the whole time; there was a lack of information on the process of the disciplinary actions.

“It was just super chaotic for me,” said Krull.

Moore mentioned a similar issue in communication from administration as well. Both students agreed that it was something that could be improved upon and make the situation better for both sides.

There may be many answers to solving the issues brought on through suspension policies and the role of the administration, however, it is clear that a consensus must be agreed upon. Hopefully, the system will continue to improve through increasing communication and understanding between both administrator and student in question.

Serving justice to students: restoratively

KENDALL FLOYD
Reporter

At the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, Brett Rein was hired as the new Restorative Justice Coordinator. But what exactly is Restorative Justice? This seems to be a popular question at Durango High School this year as recent outrage about suspension policies have become more relevant.

Durango High School has implemented Restorative Justice mainly as a way to “get students back into the classroom,” said assistant principal Amy Swartz.

By reducing the number of suspension days, the student will ultimately miss less school work. Although this program is relatively new at Durango High School this year, it is safe to say that teachers, students, and administrators alike have already seen a massive amount of positive and encouraging change.

With Restorative Justice there’s a spectrum,” said Rein.

On one end of the spectrum is the reactionary side, where a student who is having issues with attendance, gets caught with a substance, or is frequently involved in conflicts is eligible for the program. The main point is to restore any damage done to a relationship.

“We use the metaphor of throwing a pebble in a pond and there’s ripple effects,” said Rein.

Restorative Justice works to repair those ripples that were caused by the pebble. Through the opportunity to talk in a safe environment, the student is allowed to discuss the impacts of their choices and have the opportunity to create a solution.

The other end of the spectrum is “helping to build relationships in the school in general,” said Rein.

Whether that’s between students, teachers, or administration. Brett works closely with Durango High School staff to help create a more tight-knit environment within the school. The goal of this branch of Restorative Justice is to create a safer community for everyone.

“It is about giving people a voice, so that they feel heard, so that they have an opportunity to express themselves,” said counselor Sean Hembree.

Restorative Justice is a way to help everyone heal and understand each other. Through this, Durango High School staff can address behaviors in a constructive way, which is a valuable experience for everyone.

“A lot of times there is a reduction suspension,” said Rein.

In most cases, a student who is caught breaking school rules is given a choice: they can choose to be suspended for their set amount of time, or they can work with Brett in the Restorative Justice Program in lieu of more suspension days.

“I have close to 75 to 80 students and that just keeps going up,” said Rein.



Photo credit Kendall Floyd

Brett also checks in on other students who are not officially in the Restorative Justice program but can benefit from added support. In addition, Brett tries to visit classrooms frequently in order to serve as an extra support for teachers as well.

“I want to be a support for everyone in the school,” said Rein.

In order to do so, he has to make sure that he is respectful of every side. Brett works hard to make sure he understands the point of view from administration, teachers, and students.

“Students in Restorative Justice put themselves in a position where they both think about and explain their actions,” said Hembree. Students reflect on what they were doing

and why they were doing it. This process gives them insight on their actions.

Some students who are caught with drugs choose to “enter a diversion program through La Plata Youth Services,” said Hembree.

Entering the La Plata Youth Services (LPYS) program takes the place of enrolling in Restorative Justice. Sometimes, students choose not to take Restorative Justice because they don’t want to explain their actions to their loved ones.

“I work with a student for a set amount of time and after that I’ll still act as a support,” said Rein.

In addition to group meetings and discussions, Brett also checks in on his students in the classroom. It is important to encourage the student to stay up to date with school work during the Restorative Justice process.

“The process can’t be entirely transparent,” said Hembree.

It is meant to protect the privacy of the student and their family. This can be hard for administrators because they are put in a situation where they cannot provide information on an issue.

“I think it was pointless because even though I went through it, it didn’t change my views” said So. Georgia Mynatt. A lot of students feel that the Restorative Justice program was meaningless because it didn’t reach them in an impactful way. Overall, they feel that it was an unhelpful experience.

“It was nice to talk to someone, but it felt kind of pointless. The actual conversation didn’t help me” said anonymous. The program does not require the student to miss a lot of class time or after school activities, so under the right circumstances, it can be a good option for those who are worried about falling behind.

Snow day? Snow-way!

EVERY WICKES AND JAMIE HETTI
Reporters

It is roughly 7:20 am and you begin your daily commute to your school. It had snowed the previous night and you could have sworn today was going to be a snow day but the school district has yet to contact you about delays and or a school cancellation. As a new driver, you can't help but worry about the horrid road conditions but you have to trust your beginner driver skills and venture to school regardless. You soon reach a stretch of road that you can see is icy because of the morning sun glistening off of it. The rear of your car loses traction and begins to slide and you fishtail straight towards a steep ditch. In last effort to prevent your car from continuing its descent into the ditch, or worse another car, you pump your breaks, stear, and switch gears but it is no use. The front end of your car smashes into the bottom of a steep ditch and you're thrust forward. Now this has happened before but on a much smaller scale and you went unscathed but this time you are seriously injured. You and your parents are left wondering, could this have been prevented with a snow day or a delay and is the 9R school district really taking into consideration those students who live out of town? Are they paying attention to the vastly different road conditions outside of town? Are the necessary precautions being taken to make sure students and staff who live in Mancos, Bayfield, Hermosa, and Hesperus arrive safely at school?

At the peak of the winter season Durango 9-R seems to be full of snow day decisions that Durango High school doesn't fully concur with. The 2018-2019 winter has been full of surprises. From dry cold mornings to icy blizzards, is driving to school safe for the members of DHS who live outside of the district?

Junior Sophie Kairalla has to drive far south to get to school in the mornings. She admits "My driveway is bad. It's steep and windy." Not only is her driveway unsafe, but the main roads are just as dangerous.

"On my way to school in the winter I see a lot of cars that have slipped off of the roads. I would get stuck or slip around if i didn't have the car I have" said Kairalla. Sophie, as a junior, has been driving for some time now, but not everyone has had all the driving experience that winter in Durango requires.

"I feel bad for new drivers, some kids just got their license and have to drive in bad weather for the first time" said Kairalla.

Teacher Jessica Bright lives 30 miles away from the school, and on a snowy day, it takes her about an hour and ten minutes to get to school.

"I'd love to see flexibility for staff that lives outside of the district. If there is a time where I don't feel safe driving to school, I'd like to see an option for a teacher snow day or something like that" said Bright.

Mrs. Bright is one of the many people from DHS who travel from the Bayfield area to Durango. There seems to be a straight away along the path rom the two towns that always invites trouble.

"There is a very shaded part of the road going from Bayfield to Durango. Every storm, it is very icy and we often see a lot of people pulled over or sliding. Sometimes we even slide around" said Bright.

Students Alexa Howell and Teslin Stetcher both expressed the extra time needed to get to school and the rough conditions they face while living so far out of town. Howell, who lives in Hermosa, was in a car accident February 6th due to icy road conditions and an excessive amount of snow the night before.

"The car I was in started sliding on ice and we spun around straight into a snow-bank on the opposite side of the road!" said Howell.

Although unharmed, Howell worries about the next time this happens and the safety



Photo credit Avery Wickes

of her and her family.

"Usually the weather gets more extreme where I live" said Howell. Teslin resides in Mancos.

"There are a lot of people who live out of town and the only logical way to keep everyone safe is a snow day" said Stetcher.

Schools in Indiana experienced treacherous weather for long periods of time, influencing them to approach canceled schools days in a more modern way. Online learning days have become an option in place of a canceled school day. eLearning is an efficient way for kids to still be engaged and do school work, but in the safety and warmth of their own homes.

"With technology now, having an online option for snow days would be great" said Bright.

So what are the qualifications for a snow day and would the Administration be more lenient to give us snow days if we had eLearning?

"I've had several who've said how many inches does it take? It's not a matter of inches. At 4:30 in the morning on snow days, my team and I get up and we drive. We'll drive to the sunnyside community and we'll drive to animas valley and we'll drive the outline communications, and really our purpose is: can folks with proper care and caution get to school? Maybe late, but can they get to school? If our buses can travel safely, we believe our parents can too" said Snowberger.

"It's far more complicated, it's not just about our high schoolers, it's about our preschoolers, and our kindergartens, and our first graders, and so if we can have school we're going to have school. We live in a very large community and there's a lot that goes into it." said Snowberger

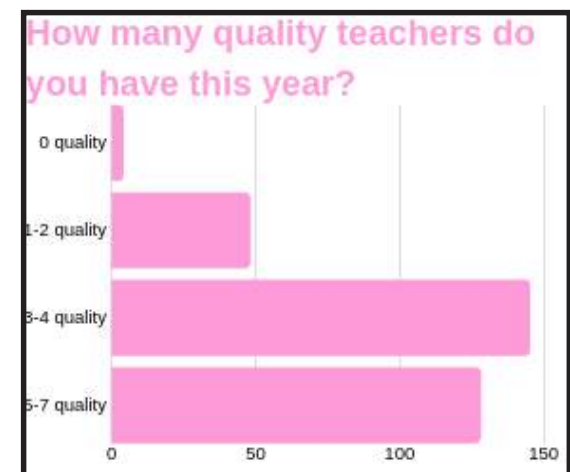
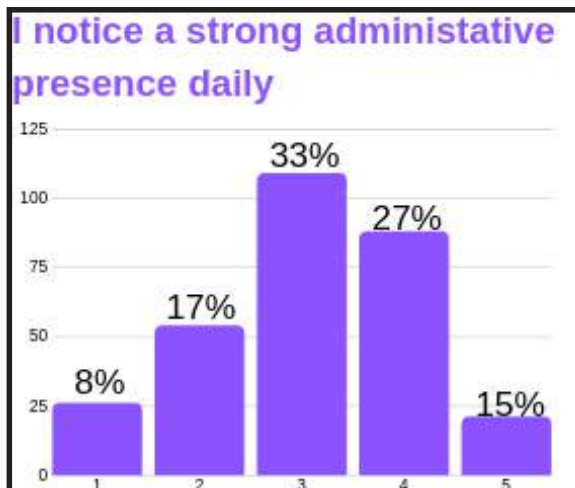
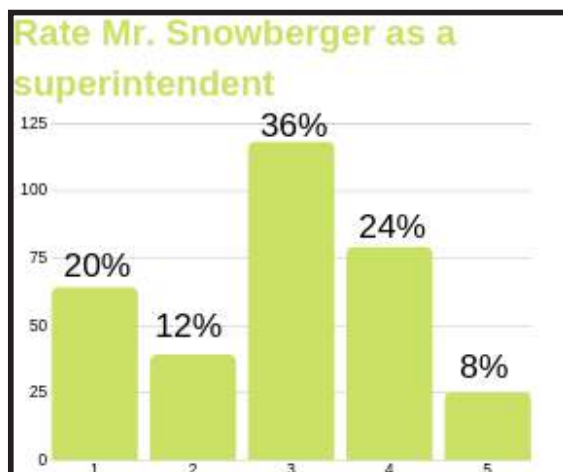
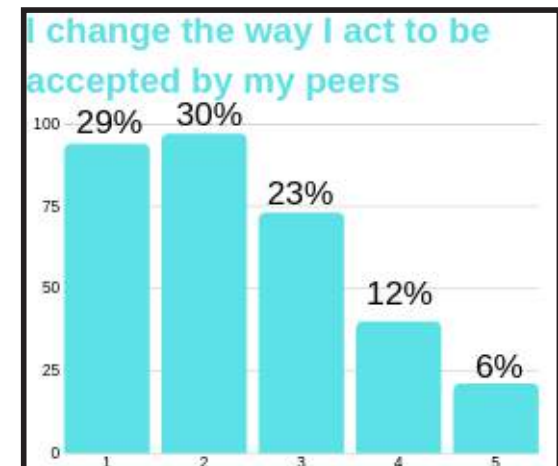
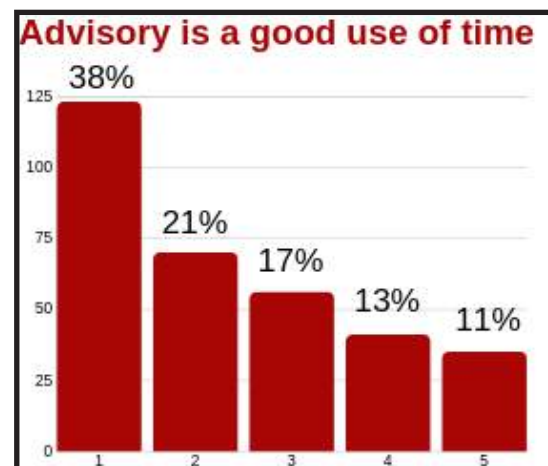
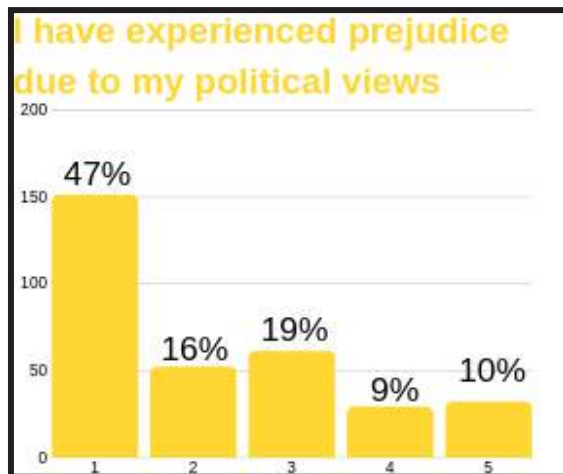
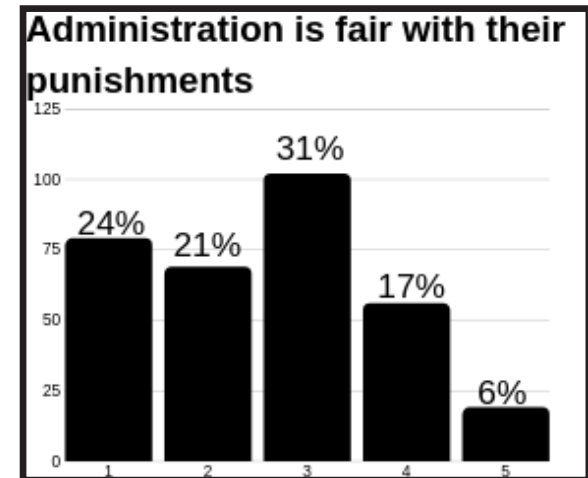
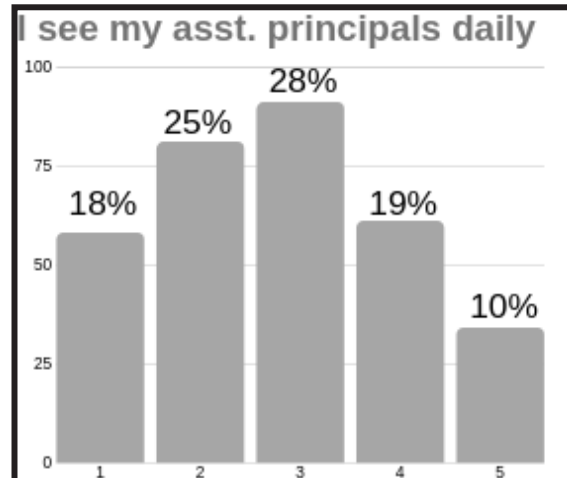
Many questions and rumors have risen up about how school will proceed now that we have used up all of our snow days.

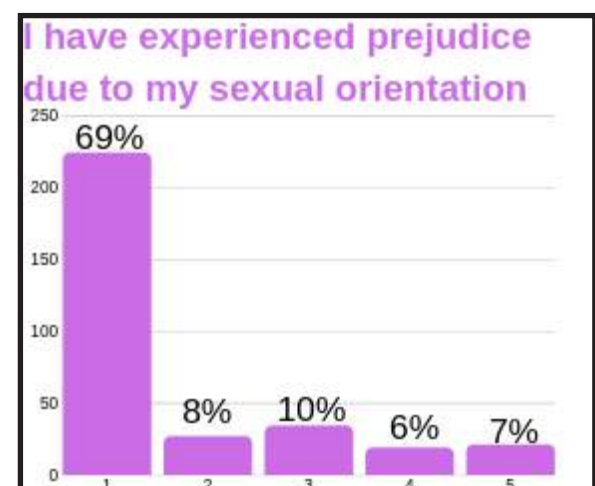
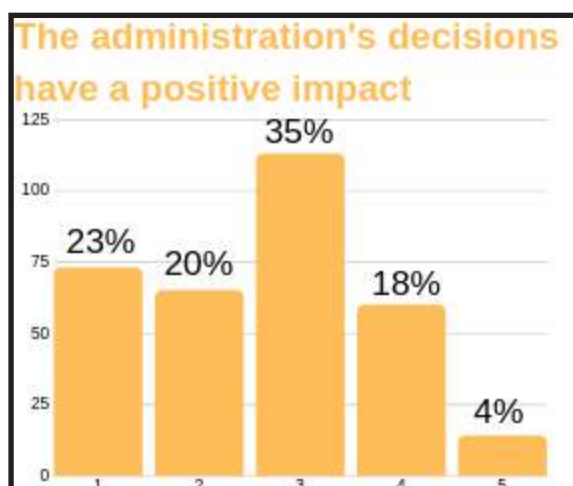
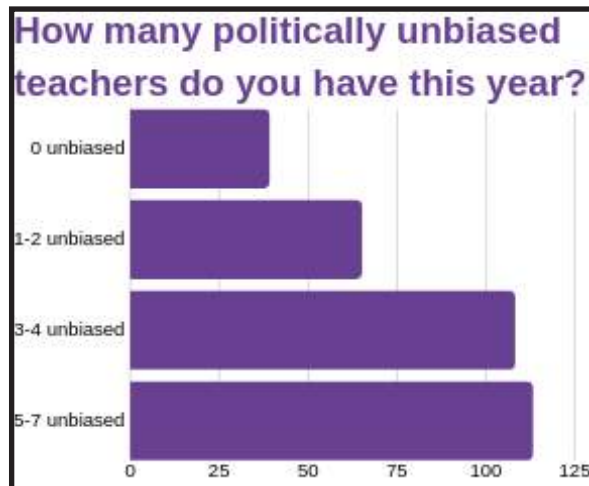
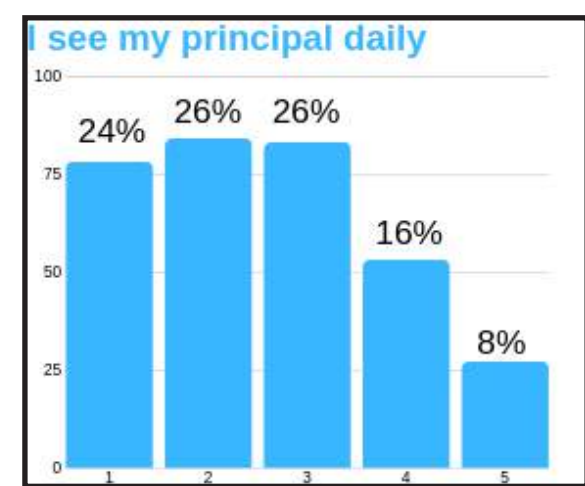
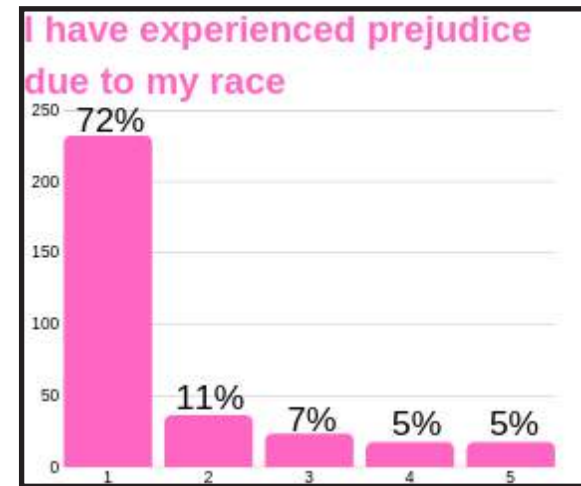
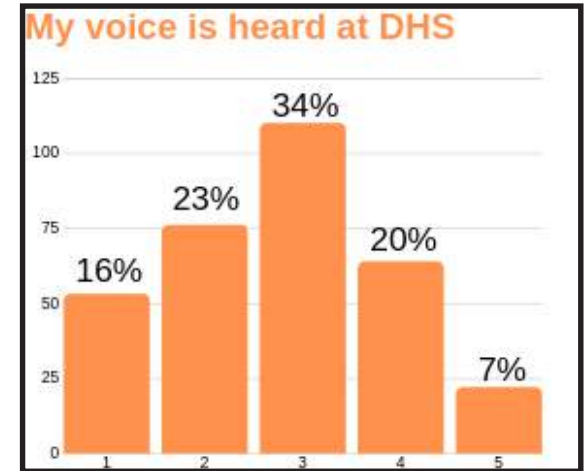
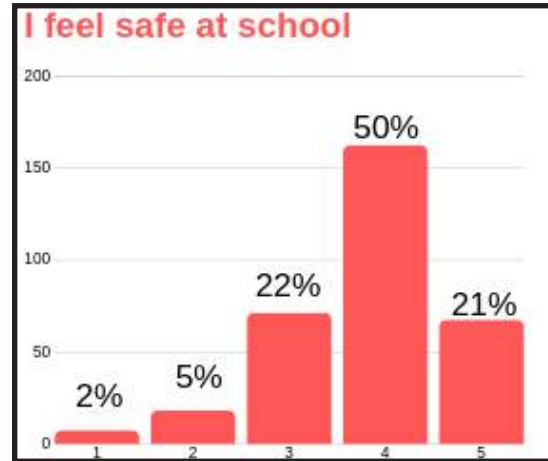
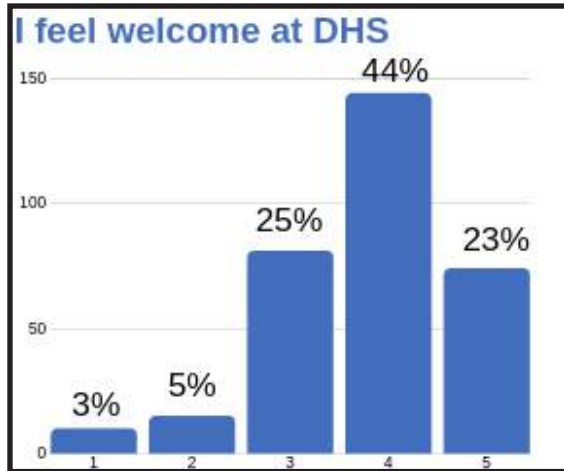
"Four days is what we built into our calendar. But if we do have another snow day, we have to say well do we cancel Monday early release, do we come to school Monday April 1st, have students come in that day? Obviously we don't want to extend the school day" said Snowberger.

Student survey results: How DHS students feel at school

El Diablo administered a student survey during advisory which yielded almost 400 responses. All grade levels were represented, and the survey was distributed to every student through a teacher provided link. All students were encouraged to answer these questions.

Key:
1 - Strongly Disagree
5 - Strongly Agree







Fighting for Equality

Denver Women's March

“Conversation is key during this time of division as well as compromise. We forget that each of these women is in constant spotlight and must remember the purpose of the march in the first place, and the validity of that purpose.”

MIA BOUDREAU
Lifestyle Head

For the third consecutive year, protesters gathered in the streets across America to march for equality and representation. On January 19, thousands of people nationwide participated in the annual Women’s March.

Following the inauguration of President Trump in 2017, inflamed activists and protesters held the first official Women’s March. Now, two years later, the organization faces controversy and allegations against its leaders.

Accused of making anti-semitic remarks, leaders and founders of Women’s March Inc. denied allegations against them, but still face a loss in support. In response to these claims, places like New Orleans, and cities in California and Chicago canceled the planned marches that were affiliated with the organization.

Additional organizations have been founded that share most of the same goals, and agendas as Women’s March Inc. but have ensured that people know that they have no connection to the organization itself.

“Conversation is key during this time of division as well as compromise. We forget that each of these women is in constant spotlight and must remember the purpose of the march in the first place, and the validity of that purpose” said DHS Sr. Aubrey Hirst, who attended the march in Washington D.C.

Despite divisions between supporters, marches still had high turn-out rates as protesters focused on their goals in achieving equality.

Building up to the 2019 Women’s March was the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh into the Supreme Court despite sexual assault allegations, the midterm elections, and the longest ever US government shutdown. This year’s march also had a large focus on protesting against President Trump and emotions leading up to the 2020 election.

While there were some political progressions for women in 2018, many people feel like steps have been taken in the opposite direction and that equality is becoming more difficult to reach.

“I was here two years ago and I felt it was very important to come back because we’ve kind of progressed backward in our country and I’m very upset by that,” said Kathy Barger, a protester who attended the Denver Women’s March.

With the march occurring at a height of controversial political events, emotions were running high as people passionately took to the streets.

“Since this year’s march was during the shutdown, the anger surrounding that was unique to the march. Overall, what was trivial about this year’s march was the turnout despite the controversy surrounding the founders of the Women’s March,” said Hirst.

While both large scale marches, as well as smaller and more local marches, were held to show support, there is still discrimination against people who identify as feminists.

There was a march held locally in Durango that aligned with the date of the national march, and was co-sponsored by UUFD (Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Durango), Indivisible Durango, and Planned Parenthood that encouraged the community to advocate. Despite this, local feminists still have a hard time finding their place in the small town.

“I am a proud feminist and with education and experience came my identity. I am always willing to have conversations. Here in Durango, my intentions are extremely undermined and I have received a fair amount of hatred, but during the march I felt at home and that my voice was worth something,” said Hirst.

Any location will still include people who don’t support activists, but bigger cities tend to have larger venues where more people with the same goals and similar beliefs can gather.

The 2019 Women’s March in Denver, CO had an estimated turn-out of 80,000 people. Among the protesters were men and women, LGBTQ+, minorities, young and old, all demanding equality and sharing a common goal.

“I need to feel like there’s some outward sign of something changing. [The march] gives me a reason to feel like people care. You don’t actually see it, but it actually feels like its tangible almost because being a minority and white sometimes I just feel like a lot of people kind of sit back and watch things happen, and that indifference is just really draining and really disheartening. So this is a really, really great way of building that energy back up and having faith again,” said Minisha, a protester at the Denver march.

When asked why they were marching, many people offered a similar response. This goes to show that there is still some unity within the march.

“I am marching because I believe women deserve every opportunity that men have,” said Seth, another protester at the Denver march.

Put simply, a lot of people felt as if they were marching for too many reasons to count, and stated that they marched for everyone.

“I’m marching for everyone here and that can’t be here,” said Denver protester Katie Rosen.

This year’s march proved that even amongst divisions and controversies, the activists and protesters that gathered to march were united in a fight for equality.

14 Features

Reaching Common Grounds



Photo by Corbin Miller

Have you ever wanted to connect more with the community and learn beneficial life skills? Common Grounds Cafe, located inside the Durango Public Library, incorporates these important skills for students with special needs to help prepare them for opportunities after high school.

Common Grounds Cafe helps high school students, as well as those aged 18 to 21 with disabilities, to gain important work experiences. The cafe is open Monday through Friday, from 10 am to 2 pm.

Devon Parson, the co-founder of Common Grounds Cafe, strives to bring opportunities to students who would normally not be able to have access to important work and life experiences.

“We started Common Grounds Cafe to provide a supportive work experience for students with disabilities, which seems to be lacking in this community. Being able to provide a safe area where students can learn important vocation skills alongside a job coach,” said Parson.

Parson started the cafe in 2014, alongside others who work for the district, after presenting to the Public Library advisory board.

Common Grounds Cafe works to give students who learn and work there many important life skills that they will need post-high school.

“At Common Grounds, we provide not only important vocation skills but independent living skills. We teach them that if they are running late to check in with their

job coach or find someone to cover their shift. We’re providing those employment skills, independent living skills, and the opportunity for them to be productive members of the community,” said Parson.

To support students working there and teach them important life and work skills, Corrie McCarthy, Paraprofessional at DHS, helps run the coffee shop and provides important training to the students who help run the cafe.

“It’s incredibly important for our students to be able to come out into the community and be supported in a work environment. Our customers learn a lot about our students as well and really benefit from those interactions. They can see our students having a first job and being very productive and hard working, given the right amount and type of support to learn to work independently,” said McCarthy.

Common Grounds Cafe develops students’ skills while serving locally baked and brewed goods. They serve sandwiches from Bread bakery and brew locally roasted Desert Sun Coffee.

In anticipation of further developing their coffee cart, Common Grounds has started a GoFundMe page to fundraise money to expand the cart itself and upgrade the electrical and plumbing. A link to the GoFundMe page can be found at the end of this article.

“Our plan with our fundraiser is to try to evolve from just a coffee cart to a coffee shop and to continually build upon this business. It slowly started falling into disrepair. We approached the library advisory board and partnered with the director of the library to start our GoFundMe, in order to do a full remodel,” said Parson.

Once they solve the electrical and plumbing issues, the cafe plans on providing different skills with blenders to the students and to create a more fully-run coffee shop.

Many students with special needs from DHS, like So. Dillion Italiano, work at Common Grounds Cafe during the school day as apart of one of their work- experience classes.

“I work at Common Grounds Cafe because it is a very nice opportunity to show me what I can do. I have learned how to help customers and make coffee for them,” said Italiano.

There are currently 20 students working at Common Grounds Cafe who are developing important skills that will open them up to many other work opportunities in the community.

“We’ve had many students move on from here to paid employment in the community, at the Strater, Zia, Starbucks, and other restaurants around Durango,” said Parson.

Students who work at Common Grounds Cafe develop their social skills alongside their work skills. Working in a very supportive environment allows the students to connect easily with others and build good relationships.

“I really enjoy seeing interactions and relationships grow between our students and regular customers and patrons of the library,” said McCarthy.

The location of Common Grounds Cafe benefits those at the library by giving them access to an affordable and nice coffee and lunch location. It’s become a regular lunch location for those who work at the library.

“I like getting to see the customers personalities and talking to them,” said Italiano.

Common Grounds Cafe is a very important part of the lives of many special needs students in the Durango community, as it provides them with many opportunities during and after high school.

“Common Grounds Cafe is one single step towards [our students’] goals of being independent. Every student has different goals. Many of our students have achieved living independently and maintaining some other job on their own,” said McCarthy.

To donate to Common Grounds Cafe, please visit:
<https://www.gofundme.com/common-grounds-cafe>

Mrs. Bruton's Reading Lab *Setting Students Up For Success*

HALEIGH HARPER
Reporter

According to the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 32 million adults in the United States cannot read. DHS Teacher and reading lab instructor Kristina Bruton is eager to help high school students succeed. Reading Lab is a class at DHS where students use various skills for a better understanding of literature.

"Reading Lab is really a place to experiment with a whole bunch of different reading strategies, and we try and figure out of all different strategies what works best for each student," said Bruton.

"In this class, we read, read articles, make inferences, and we make connections. It's a fun class," said Fr. Miraja Mestas, a student in Reading Lab.

Analyzing text is typically one of students' least favorite things to do, but Reading Lab uses strategies called 'signposts' that help make understanding of text easier and clue the reader in on what is important. Signposts are words and phrases in the text that help a reader find connections and relationships between ideas.

"Signposts help me a lot when I don't get something, they just help me understand more," said Mestas.

"They make me think about [the reading] much more," said Fr. Tanneigha O'John, who is also in the class.

"Some signposts leap out more to certain readers than other readers. Certain strategies work better for some readers than others. It's really all about finding whatever strategy is going to help a reader to engage more with the text to understand it better and appreciate it," said Bruton.

Reading Lab students find the best ways to understand reading. Some strategies will help a reader and some won't. For example, some strategies can relate to connecting ideas, examples, graphic organizers, and more. Some students are visual thinkers, who often prefer to use graphic organizers and notes with color to highlight what is important.

Signposts help a reader know what to look for and to see the real meaning in a text.

"We really try and get kids to fall in love with reading again," said Bruton. The best way to love reading is to read what you want and find what you like.

"My 5th period goes down to the daycare center every Friday and we read books to little kids, and that is the highlight of the week," said Bruton.

Another reading strategy for reading comprehension is reading aloud. Studies have shown that reading aloud or listening lets the brain remember and retain information more than reading silently. Reading aloud also helps the daycare kids with this.



Photo by Corbin Miller

"The youth librarian, from the Durango Public Library, was here. She made library cards for anyone in the class who didn't already have a public library card, she gave book talks, and kids were able to check out really high-interest books that we don't have copies of here in our school library," said Bruton.

Having fun with reading makes it more enjoyable, which is what Reading Lab does.

"[The class] helps reading be more enjoyable, and I understand what I'm reading and what is happening," said So. Wiley Corra, a student in the class.

Reading Lab has proved to be very helpful for students enrolled in it. They've been able to understand and comprehend more, which are both crucial skills in understanding and succeeding in society.

"It helps me with a better understanding and comprehension of what I'm reading," said So. Tony Chavez, who took the class as a freshman.

"I would like for kids who take this class to leave feeling confident that they are good readers and I hope that they just again fall in love with books," said Bruton.

Bruton's main goal is to help students learn to appreciate reading and help increase comfort levels with reading and writing in general. Finding confidence in reading is a great feeling for the students, which is what Reading Lab is all about.

Teachers' strike

Union organizes protests for increased pay



Photo by Margaux Newby

MARGAUX NEWBY
Reporter

On January 22nd, 2019, tens of thousands of teachers flocked to the streets in Los Angeles to protest in favor of raising the salaries of teachers, having smaller class sizes, and hiring more support staff.

Teachers in Denver went on strike from Monday, February 11th to Wednesday, February 13th. In Colorado, 27 different school districts were forcibly closed due to these protests.

“Many, many teachers are in support of a strike, in fact, 93% of people who voted, voted yes for a strike,” said Valerie Lovato, a teacher in the Denver area.

The average teacher salary in Denver is \$57,100 per year, which is not a livable wage for many teachers. Even though this is the average wage across the state, however, this is much more than the average starting wage for teachers, which is \$38,000 in the US. The teachers protested for higher pay and got an 11.7% pay raise.

“When I bought my condo three years ago, the loan amount I received was not enough to purchase a condo in Denver. I had to move to the outer neighborhoods to find something that was in my price range. I struggle with not living in the city I work for, especially when it comes to voting. I want to be able to vote for changes that impact my students and I cannot,” said Lovato.

Colorado has the 34th lowest teacher pay of all 50 states in the U.S, with an average teacher salary of \$52,480 per year, which is the lowest paid form of a bachelor’s degree. The starting teacher salary at DHS is \$40,000, which, for many people is not a liveable wage due to the median home cost in Durango being \$422,800.

“In Durango, it’s very, very expensive, but personally it’s also a choice to live here. A lot of people have to make choices about what they’re willing to sacrifice.” said David Weisfeldt, a government teacher at DHS and a member of the Durango Education Association.

The DEA is a group of teachers that come together to support the rights

of educators.

“I like the idea of a professional organization that is working to improve the conditions of teaching,” said Weisfeldt. “I like the idea of a professional organization that is working to improve the conditions of teaching,” said Weisfeldt.

It is because of the teachers union that thousands of teachers came together to protest in Denver and LA. Teacher strikes are more likely to bring out a change in larger urban areas.

“[In] rural communities, there’s less flexibility about where you can get new income sources or where you can shift money around. Bigger cities I think maybe have a little bit more options on how they finance education,” said Weisfeldt.

On Wednesday, January 23rd, teachers returned to their classrooms after the changes that were demanded were made. One of the things the LA teachers achieved from the strike were smaller class sizes. Many teachers have up to 50 students in a class, which will be significantly reduced during the next few school years.

“I think those big districts often drive change in the state, so I’m really excited to see those actions,” said Elizabeth Dillman, an E.L.L teacher at DHS and a member of DEA.

Teachers who participated in these protests were also able to gain more support staff. 300 nurses, 77 counselors, and 82 librarians will be added to LA schools.

“What I was excited about in LA, is they’re not just striking for higher pay, but they wanted more counselors for students, and librarians for students and things that we have, we have really good people in those roles, but we used to have more,” said Dillman.

One of the most pressing issues brought up in the strikes of teachers is to raise teacher salary. LA teachers demanded a 6.5% raise and were able to settle for a 6% raise.

“There’s a ton of other layers of administrators, bureaucracy, and school boards that are in on making the decisions that teachers typically don’t have a lot of influence in,” said Weisfeldt.

These new additions added for teachers and schools will cost LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School District) \$175 million in the next two school years. The money will come from a state tax referendum on the 2020 ballot which could bring \$1.4 billion for LA schools. A parcel tax at the county level could also bring in money. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti stated that he is willing to redirect some city funds towards school needs.

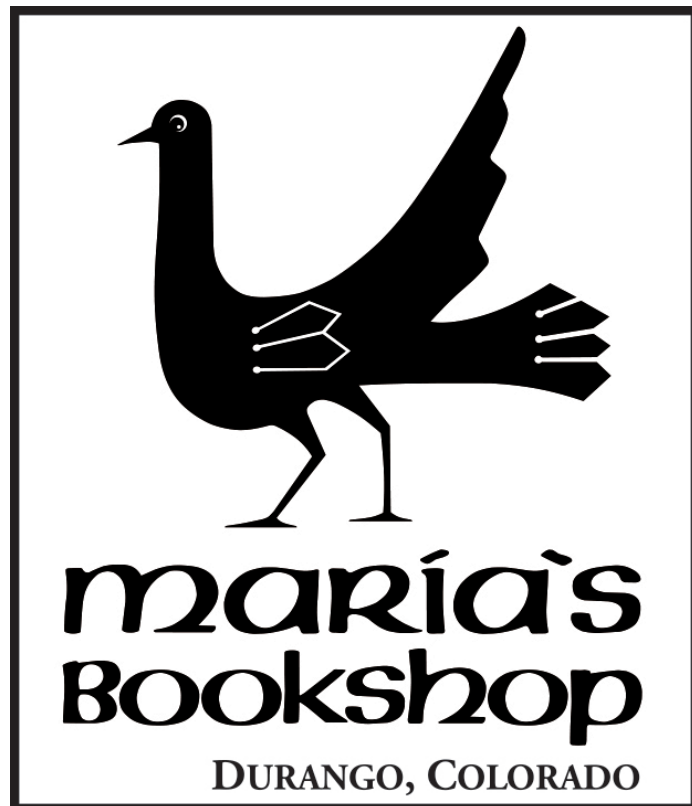
Although many teachers protest for better pay, there are also many benefits that come with being a teacher.

“In our district, for 9R, we have insurance, and so health insurance is a major expense to most families. Even though the salary might be \$52,000 on average, the actual benefits are greater than that.” said Robert Logan, the instructional coach at DHS, an AP U.S. History teacher at DHS, and a member of the Durango Education Foundation.

The DEF is a charity/non-profit organization that helps with funding schools with things that aren’t added in the regular budget.

“I like being part of a collective voice. In Durango and in the region I think our unions can work together for issues statewide, we can work together to try to deal with budgeting issues and things like that,” said Dillman.

“When you work with a company, 9R being the company, you want to have as strong a voice as possible as an employee. The Durango Education Foundation allows that voice to be heard much more readily than if it was just an individual,” said Logan.



The faces of DHS:

how diverse is our school?

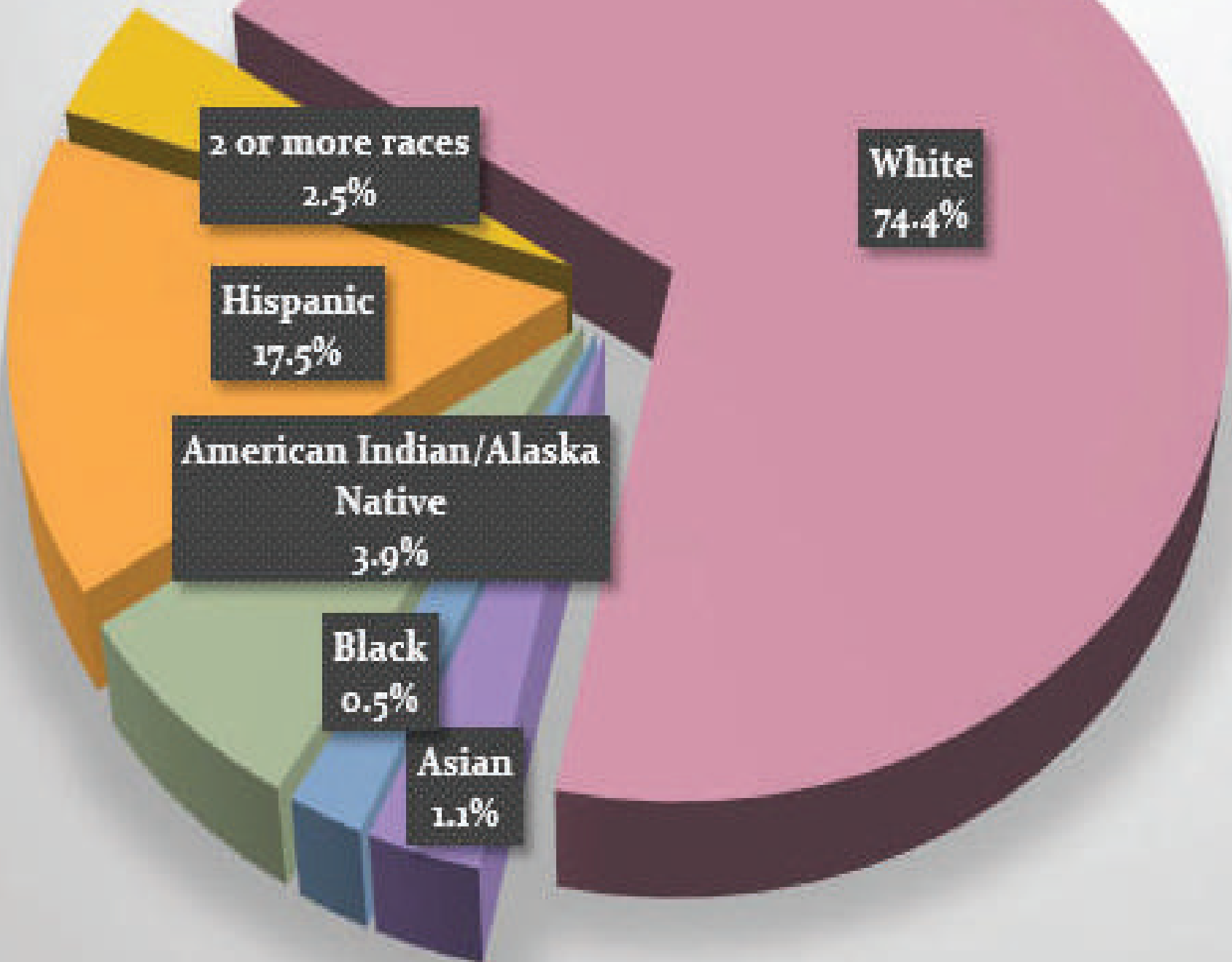


Photo by Todd Murray

Durango High School is made up of many different faces with enrollment at approximately 1100 students. A student body of that size and residing in a fairly progressive town brings a relatively diverse population. However, there are far fewer ethnic minorities than there are Caucasian students at DHS.

White students make up nearly 75% of the student body, leaving only about a quarter of students of different ethnic backgrounds. Many feel relatively welcomed in the DHS community, however, some feel there are some cracks in the system that don't really take their culture or religion into account.

The second largest demographic of students at DHS is students of Hispanic backgrounds, with a 17.5% population, which is big but still pretty small compared to white students.

Danna Vanegas is a freshman from Colombia, and she feels that in the DHS community, she is very welcomed and well represented.

"I feel pretty well accepted at DHS, even if I am from another country, I am treated the same and have the same opportunities as everyone else in the building," said Vanegas.

It's comforting that even a freshman can feel well accepted into the school on top of being from another country.

The Asian population of students at DHS is 1.1%, which is relatively low, but still pretty considerable for DHS.

So, Eric Dang doesn't face any problems regarding his ethnicity at DHS.

"I feel very accepted at DHS, everyone is very respectful and I've never experienced any hate from any of my peers," said Dang.

The smallest percentage of students at DHS are African Americans at a mere 0.5%. At an amount that small it does take things into perspective of how much of a voice is given to these students.

So, Sophia Holt feels the major proportional difference gives the minority students less opportunity.

"I feel like as a school that is primarily white it's hard for a lot of us to feel 'represented' or see our experiences reflected," said Holt.

Despite February being Black History Month, there wasn't an advisory lesson or a schoolwide announcement that took time to reflect some of the African American experiences throughout history.

A major slip up happened with student council during the valentines day hearts posted around the school. One heart read "Are you African? Because you're a fricken babe!" Another read "Is your dad a terrorist? Because you're the bomb!"

It's presumably an honest mistake on student council's part because of the cheesy pickup lines they're supposed to find online. Though, it most likely could have been prevented if the student who picked it could recognize something that is insensitive towards another's race. Mr. Garland quickly reprimanded the students once these mistakes were discovered.

This would've been a great teaching opportunity for the student. PEAT club which is run by Ms. Gonzales is all about recognizing your biases so incidents like this don't happen.

"There's a fine line between funny and inappropriate, sometimes the things you say to the people you are close to are not things you should say out in the open towards the public, and recognizing your biases is the first step to understanding this," said Gonzales.

Holt did say that there was something close to a discussion about the stance that minorities have in DHS which had some minority students meet about their interactions with other students/staff regarding race.

The meeting was set up by Mr. Hoerl, so it is possible that there can be more

TODD MURRAY
Reporter

done to include a larger amount of students in discussions of race and equality.

"I think if we work towards doing things like that, maybe we will give our minority students more of a voice," said Holt.

Though there isn't an official record of students religious beliefs at DHS, it can be assumed that there is a good amount of different religions in the school.

Sr. Carter Marshall follows the Jewish faith and thinks DHS is a mixed bag when it comes to representation.

"I feel as though DHS is kind and fair in the sense of attitude and acceptance, but not equally in the sense of importance," said Marshall.

Something that is important to most all religions is the holidays to celebrate their beliefs, but DHS and really most schools in America don't take off school for those special days.

"A Lot of Jewish students and teachers are not given time to enjoy their holidays, whereas there are two weeks off for a holiday that several kids at DHS don't celebrate," said Marshall.

Most schools are full of mostly Christian students which makes it almost seem like the school system revolves around a Christian belief because of the holidays celebrated over others. The DHS handbooks include most religions holidays in the monthly calendars but we're not off those days, unlike Christmas and Easter.

On the outside, it may look like DHS is a pretty well-rounded community and doesn't come off as intolerant of any sort of race that comes to the school.

Though it can't be ignored that there is still a handful that feels more can be done to make the place more representative of some of the backgrounds whether racially or religiously.

Superintendent Dan Snowberger thinks diversity is very important but feels poverty is also an issue that should be addressed.

"I think one of the things we've really focused on is students from poverty. Since I've been here one in three of our students is at the poverty level," said Snowberger.



Basketball
spotlight:
**Anthony
Flint**



Photo Courtesy of Gary Vandenberg

B

eing the youngest member on a team is never an easy position, in fact, it is quite intimidating. It can be very tough to have courage and confidence when surrounded by older, and more experienced players. Part of overcoming this sometimes awkward stage is achieved simply through determination and hard work. That is exactly what Fr. Anthony Flint has done this 2018-19 basketball season. At only 14, Flint received a starting position on the boys' varsity basketball team.

"I first saw Anthony play when he was in 7th grade. My first impression of him was that he was polite, well spoken, and respectful. I immediately knew he was going to be amazing and someone to watch on the basketball floor," said head coach Alan Batiste. From an early age, Anthony was a force to be reckoned with. Batiste has been coaching for seven years and believes that Flint has something special. He not only respects Flint's skills on the court but also his overall character as a person.

"Anthony is such a good kid. He is self-disciplined and incredibly respectful. He always stays humble and even sets an example for his older teammates" Batiste said. There is a huge difference between playing basketball in middle school, and playing basketball in high school. The athletes are much bigger and stronger when playing in high school and have developed a much deeper understanding of the game. However, this didn't seem to phase Flint.

"I was obviously a little intimidated to play with the older boys, but I knew that I couldn't let that get in the way of my game. I just worked really hard and tried to focus on improving. I knew I could hang with them," said Flint. Flint has played basketball since first grade and absolutely loves it. He played for the Miller Angels in middle school and is very proud to now play for the Demons. He has a passion for the sport and it shows on the court.

"Basketball is an escape for me. Every time I'm stressed out I just go play and I always feel better. I also like basketball because it is one of those sports that allows you to have really meaningful relationships with people. I like the team aspect of it all," said Flint. Sometimes it is hard to have chemistry with players up to four years older than you. However, this is not a problem for Flint. Everyone is very close on the team and they work very well together.

"I'm pretty tight with all the boys on the team. They're fun to be around and they hold me to a high standard on the court. I think that's why I have had such a good year because I want to play for them," said Flint. After having an upsetting season last year with only four wins, the Demons shifted their mindset. Their main goal this year was to play as a team and not play as individuals. Flint has helped the team fulfill that goal.

"A lot of young players that are really good tend to get in their heads. They get cocky and try to outshine everyone. But Anthony doesn't do that. He obviously knows he's talented, but is so humble and always sticks with the team," said Sr. Lance Kemp. Unsurprisingly, the team has been quite successful this year with ten wins. They won their first playoff game against Skyline High School, the 18th ranked team in the state. Unfortunately, they lost in the second round to Pueblo Central. Regardless, Anthony has been an essential player for the Demons throughout the season and has made sure his name was heard.

"Anthony had 20 points in one game. And six of those points were three-pointers. I don't know a lot of fourteen-year-olds that can do that," said Sr. Lance Kemp. Flint has a very bright future ahead of him. Not only is he extremely talented for his age, but he also is very mature. He has helped his team discover their strengths and reach their goals. The Demons started a new chapter at the beginning of the season and are ending it with no regrets.

GEORGIA MYNATT
Reporter

A. Flint | Team Totals

Total Points:

74

3pts Made:

15

Avg. Points Per Game:

5.3

Total Points:

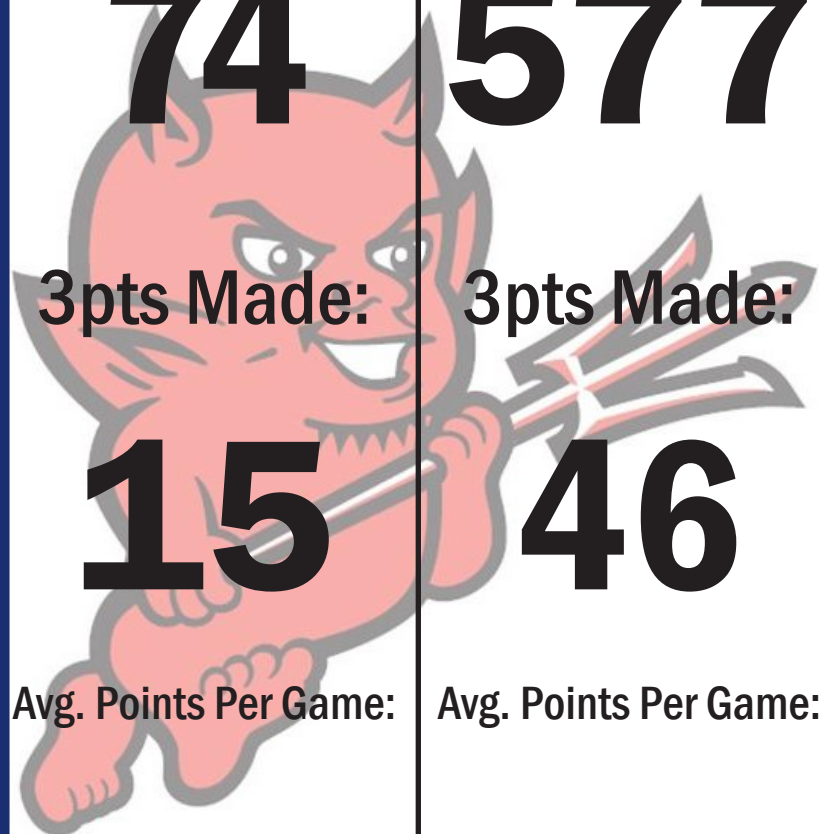
577

3pts Made:

46

Avg. Points Per Game:

41.2



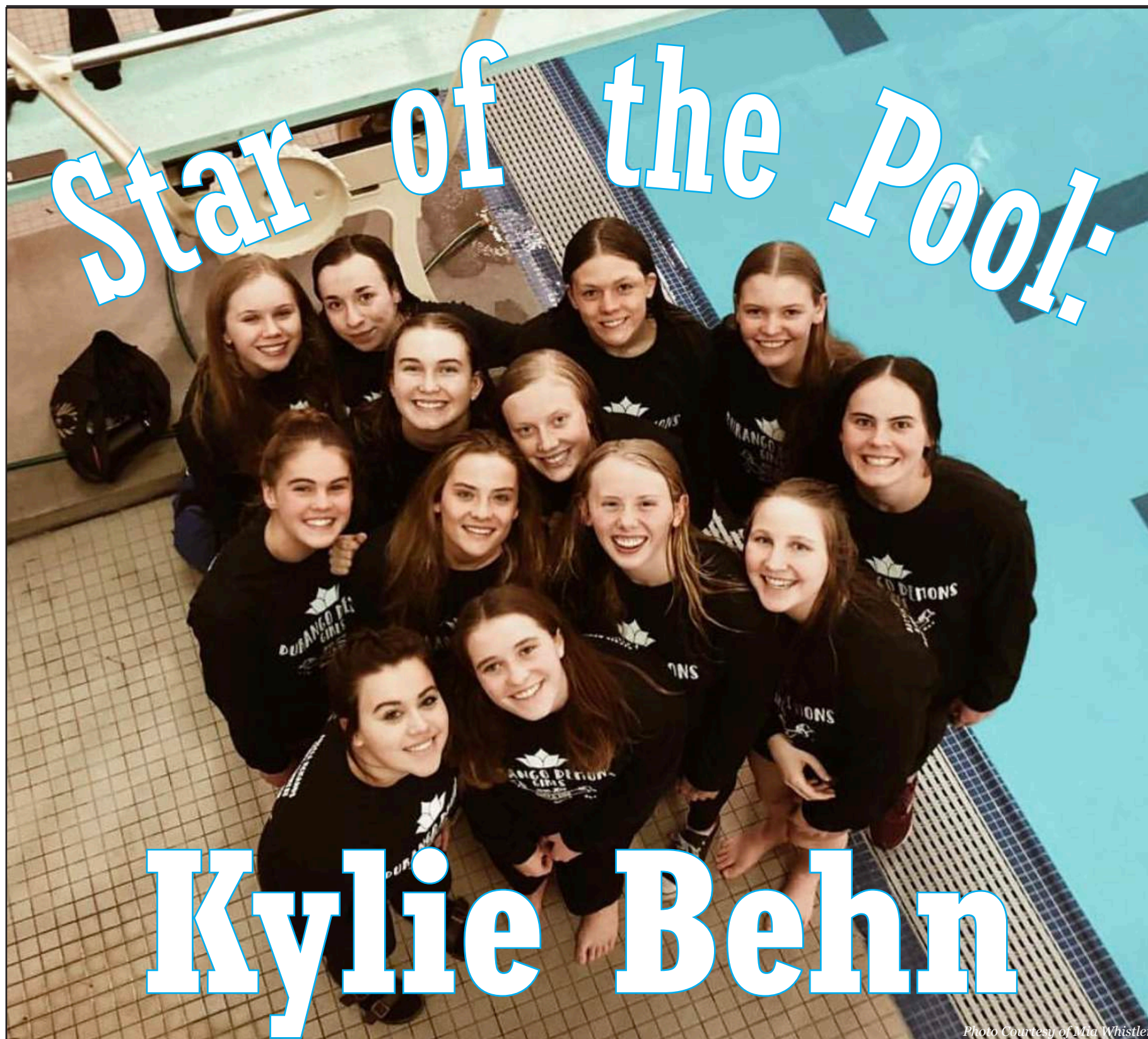


Photo Courtesy of Mia Whistler

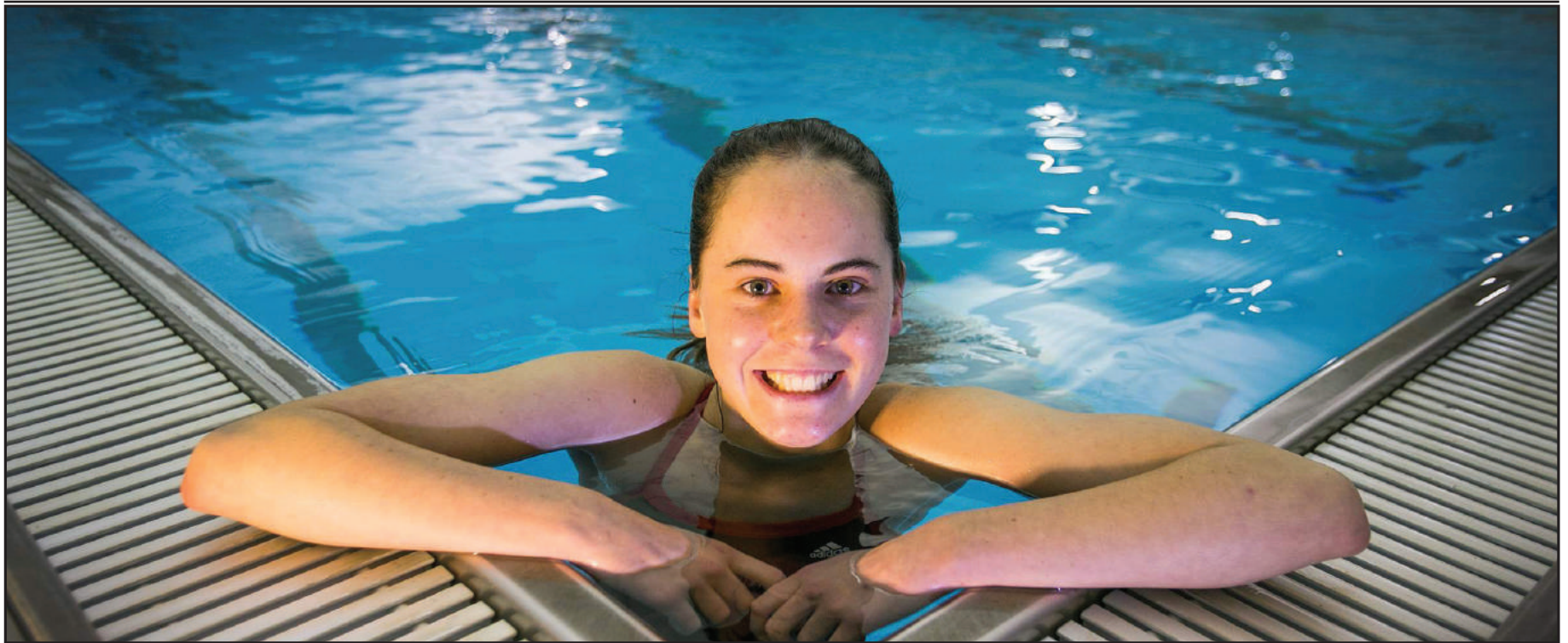


Photo Courtesy of Gary Vandenberg

MIA WHISTLER
Reporter

Success is measured in more than wins and losses. Teamwork, effort, performance, and discipline are all part of it on the lady demons swim and dive team. “We work hard, we train hard, we compete, yet at the end of the day I just want the girls to have fun while they achieve their goals,” said Tom Joyner, head coach of the swim and dive team.

Being a team wasn't the only thing that the swim and dive program delivered on this year. The team gave an incredible performance at this year's state competition, where they took 6th overall. While the team was breaking school records and wowing us all, one diver stood out among them all.

“Kylie Behn has been placing 2nd at districts for the past couple years, and her injury prior to the season didn't slow her down. An injured ACL can't stop her from achieving her goals. It was truly amazing to watch her overcome her biggest setbacks” said Joyner. Behn, one of the team's top divers, had an injury of a torn ACL previous to this season, which predictably required her to give her all in order to make her final season the best yet.

“I had to compensate for the limited range of motion in my knee for about the first half of season by only doing dives in the pike and straight position because my knee wouldn't bend far enough for tuck dives,” said Behn. Not only did Kylie impress her coach this year, but also her family and herself. Despite struggling in the beginning of the season with her ACL injury, Behn was able to come back out of this, earning the diver of the year award, never giving up.

“I think that my strong recovery from an injury, performance, and sportsmanship lead me to receive the diver of the year award,” said Behn. Despite her success in the pool, knowing that this is her final high school makes her sad to leave it behind. With this in mind, Behn made it her goal to work on the team and have one last hurrah.

“We practiced, traveled, and competed as a team with the thought that everyone

achieves more when working together and pushing each other. But we also became close friends, all of us,” said Behn. This outstanding swim/diver didn't let any injury reduce her strong drive and love for the sport. Not only does she love to dive and compete but the team aspect of the program has always been a big part of it for her since day one, and she continues to be an excellent teammate.

“Kylie is always in a good mood and always lifting us up when we're down. Even if she got frustrated at times with her own performance she never let that stop her from supporting other swimmers and divers,” said Jr. diver Olivia Mummery

The team isn't the only thing that Behn will miss. In addition to her award as diver of the year Behn's longtime dive coach, Mark Flemming, also received the award of dive coach of the year.

“Mark and I have developed the greatest coach/athlete relationship because he began coaching me in gymnastics when I was 8 and then again in diving. Mark has done a great job at expanding the dive program in Durango and has helped more divers than ever from DHS make and place at the state level,” said Behn. Kylie has been diving for as long as she can remember and it has earned a place in her heart. Her love of the sport will continue as she plans to pursue diving throughout college.

“I plan on diving either as part of a club team or as a walk-on to a college team depending on the school I choose. This season was successful in many ways, from placing 6th at state, to being a team and befriending each other it is said to be one of the best seasons yet. With Behn having an excellent season and the team overall achieving their goals.

“I am very proud of my ladies, swimming, and diving, this year was, and they delivered, on all fronts,” said Joyner.

That's a Wrap:**Girls' Basketball**

ABBEY HUNT
Reporter

As students athletes continue through school, there's no doubt things get more competitive, but the girls varsity basketball team took this challenge head-on this season. Throughout the season, they learned to be able to recognize their downfalls and work with them to grow in to a better team.

"We did pretty well this season. We started off pretty slow, but after a while we realized we were a defense oriented team, and once we got that we were able to start shutting teams down," said Sr. Danielle Lee. "We do have really good scorers on our team, but when it comes to our strong suits for everyone and being able to work together, it's definitely our defense." The team faced difficulties throughout the season, but didn't have trouble fixing their mistakes.

"As a team, our weakest point was not being able to come out and battle like we usually do because we would get in our heads when facing tough times," said Lee, "But our strongest point was being able to battle what shut us down. Our coaches enforced working together and communication. Practicing in our offense made us get better throughout the year." Although they encountered challenges like this, they were able to pick themselves up and fight back against their downfalls. The team had 11 wins and 12 losses, but winning wasn't the team's only target.

"We supported each other a lot during the season. We are all really close friends and we can all come together if there's an issue. We get along really well and that shows on the court," said Lee. "Being on the team also builds relationships because

playing games makes our bond grow stronger, but also you know that someone will have your back. You can apply that into everyday life because you know that someone's going to be there for you." Not only do the girls try hard on the court, they also try hard to set an example for future varsity players, showing them how to help lead the team for next year.

"To set an example for JV players, we warm up with the JV team which helps the younger players and lets us coach them. We also make sure we listen to the coaches to show the expectations," said Lee. "It's important for girls to have confidence in themselves and talk to each other on the court. This will basically help the girls next year." said Head Coach Tim Fitzpatrick, who was proud of his team's performance this season and their hard work and effort

"I just really enjoy coaching basketball and all the girls give great effort," he says. "I have learned a lot about each of the girls and what motivates them to compete. Building and maintaining a positive culture is most important to me in leading a successful team." Fitzpatrick also notices the strong bond between the girls and the way they have each other's back.

"I think the team is doing well, they continue to work hard for each other, Especially for how young this year's team is." said So. Maddy Mcmanus who also played varsity this year, and she was proud of her team's achievements.

"We have great team dynamics. Everyone is really close and we all support each other every day in practice and during games," said McManus. Although Maddy knows this wasn't the best of her seven years playing basketball, she still looks at it with a positive attitude.

The Demon Way: Unified Basketball

Team sports help bring people together and provide chances to meet new people, make new friends and overall have a great time. Unified basketball represents all of these qualities in a fun and enjoyable way. This sport joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team, helping them to interact while being active in a creative way.

Unified basketball is a worldwide program that many schools have adopted to help promote student inclusion through sports and make it fun for players who wouldn't get the opportunity to play. This sport helps students with disabilities to be more involved and meet new people as they play. Although unified sports are not very popular in the southwestern region of Colorado, many schools such as Durango High School have unified soccer and unified basketball.

"We are the only region in Colorado that doesn't have a special Olympics. We are trying to build it so eventually, we can have more teams in this area to participate," said Matt Clark, director of the Unified sports program. Clark's goal for this year is to include more schools such as Ignacio and Bayfield in Special Olympics to make it more fun for the student-athletes and coaches.

"I think being in front of the student body and fans and being able to play and people cheering them on definitely boosts their self confidence and helps them feel like they're part of the school," said Clark. Unified Basketball gives the students the opportunity to play sports that they usually wouldn't be able to play. Durango High School offers unified sports such as soccer and basketball to special needs students to better help their high school experiences and make it more fun for them.

Special Olympics Unified Sports is a fast-growing initiative program that brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together on the same team to compete. Most schools throughout the United States are involved in the Special Olympics or Unified Sports to better help their student-athletes that might not have the chance to be involved otherwise in school sports.

Although the DHS Unified Basketball team has many student and staff members helping with coaching, Coach Clark has put a tremendous amount of time and effort into helping the students have a fun and memorable time playing over the course of the season. Matt

CARTER TAYLOR AND LEAH WESLEY
Reporters



Clark has been involved in this program for almost 7 years and has enjoyed getting to know all the players and coach them.

One of star players, Sr. Isaac Baldera, said his favorite thing about playing is "playing with all of his friends" and "shooting baskets or dunking." He explained how he likes when everyone in the crowd cheers him on and yells his name. He also expressed how much he loves coach Clark and how he helps so much with the team and in the classroom.

"They learn a lot about teamwork and they get the experience they wouldn't usually get from getting to go and play in front of people. Harrison, one of the players on the team, loves shooting baskets and at our last game, he was on the three-point line and he looks at me and says 'soft or hard', so we told him hard, so he shoots the ball hard and he made the basket and he was so happy he was almost in tears," said Sr. Maddy Miere, one of the peer helpers who has been with the program since freshman year.

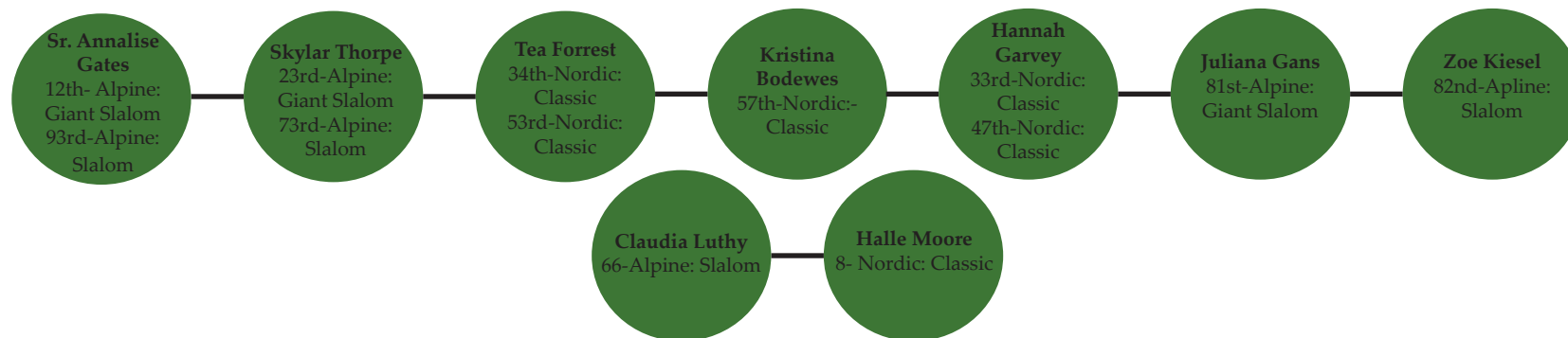
Everyone helping with this program has impacted the players' lives tremendously and it has proven to be more than a chance at community involvement. Players and peer helpers alike have gained many memories along the way, and hope to see the program reach more students in the coming years.

"I think being in front of the student body and fans and being able to play and people cheering them on definitely boosts their self confidence and helps them feel like they're part of the school," said Clark.

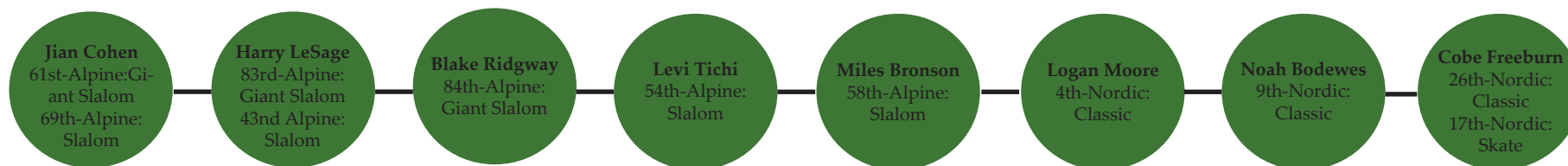


Purgatory hosts CHSSA Ski State Championships for first time: *results*

Girls place 11th with a score of 367



Boys place 8th with a score of 448



I'm going to be honest with you guys. I am not a big fan of the winter season. The cold that makes your bones ache, cleaning snow off your car windshield in the morning, the slush ruining your white shoes. It's basically the type of weather that makes you want to jump into a volcano just to get warm.

Despite this fact, many people are still fond of the snowy mountains and icy roads because of skiing. Durangatangs specifically love to "send it" in the winter, down the slippery slopes and up the ski lifts, making it not seem so terrible anymore.

I am happy for those people. I am glad that there is something that makes the blizzards and the hypothermia worth it. However, this article is not going to be about skiing because unfortunately, I have never been skiing. Yes, I know. "But you live in Durango!!" "How have you never been skiing?!" "Omg I'm taking you this weekend!" I really do appreciate the concern that others have for me about the fact that I have never been skiing, but lucky for me there is the wonderful alternative: sledding.

You see, there are people in this world that assume sledding is a simple, risk-free winter activity and just another fun way to spend a day in the white frosting covering the ground. What these people don't understand is that the only real way to make sledding worth anyone's time is by "sending it." This entails taking risks, being fearless, and not caring about snow reaching every part of your bundled up body.

A friend of mine told me recently that you aren't sending it while sledding unless you go off of Hogsback, a summit we have in Test Tracks. I am politely disagreeing with this statement. Yes, it is sending it I suppose, but it also is kind of a death wish. "Sending it" does not have to be dangerous or unsafe.

There is an art to sledding. You have to have the endurance to race up and down the steepest hills without the crutch of a ski lift to help you out. You have to first locate the best places for a sledding excursion. My favorites are all in Test Tracks, on trail and off trail, mixing adventure with sledding. Steep enough where you have

BEKAH MOENNING
Sports Editor

trouble standing, snowy enough where you have a soft landing if you were to flip upside down, fly forward, tip sideways. You know, the usual. You also have to have good company, which means you need a fellow sender alongside you and of course you need some sleds. Whatever you prefer really when it comes to this essential part of the activity.

Anyways, going to Buckley Park and gently going down the slight downhills into a wide field of snow is just not how you sled correctly. Take it from me, if you want to have a good time, it is time to start sending it. Skiing can only do so much for you. I would like to add that because of sledding, I am a bit more of a fan of the winter season. Warm thoughts!

Life of a Sports Fan:

Sending It



28 Opinion

School board meeting raises more questions than answers

EMMA JABER, CAROLINE KNIGHT, AND HALEY SZCZECH
Head Editors

Tensions have been high throughout the last few months regarding the Durango 9-R school board and administration. With this month's publication being full of hard-hitting articles - predominantly regarding the district and Durango High School policies - we took it upon ourselves to attend one of the coffee with the school board public meetings.

These meetings are designed to increase communication between staff, parents, members of the board, and anyone from the public with questions, or, what we seemed to hear more of, criticisms regarding the state of affairs in the district and schools.

As with any public meeting, community members came with concerns and frustrations. Some notable topics discussed included drug use at the high school, parent volunteer discrepancies, the lack of paraprofessionals in 9R schools, the failure of School Vault, and, more broadly, the communication gap between those who interact with students on a day to day basis and those at "higher office." Our primary motivation for attending the meeting was to ask what led to the reinstatement of Durango 9R Superintendent Dan Snowberger, and to see how the public perceived the board. We learned, shockingly enough, that 11 principals stood behind Snowberger with support, while 0 teachers did. This disparity was alarming, but, as Dr. Nancy Stubbs, the President of the school board, stated, "it's not a popularity contest."

In fact, public perception does play a role in the reinstatement of a superintendent. According to Stubbs, one of the guidelines for Snowberger's reinstatement is an approval rating of 80% or higher.

The question of where that number exactly comes from, however, is less cut and dry. The District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) is in charge of developing and distributing a parent survey and sharing their results with the Board of Education in a mid-year and end of year report. Parent surveys are advertised via 9R Parent eNotes communication, Infinite Campus email/text blasts, and by administrators. Even so, for the 2017-2018 school year, only 128 complete survey responses came from DHS, a fractional representation of families with students at the high school.

Beyond the numbers, the issue of whether parent surveys used to evaluate the Superintendent ask any questions about him directly was raised in the board meeting, as parents brought up that while many families are frustrated with administrative work, surveys focus more on their satisfaction with specific schools. In the most recent survey released by DAAC, only four questions were asked about the school district on a scale of 1-4, 1 being "disagree" and 4 being "agree" - "the district promotes and encourages high student achievement, the district effectively communicates with me about district issues, the district is moving in the right direction to improve student achievement, and the district has a welcoming, open, and responsive environment." No questions were asked directly about the Superintendent.

The "theme," they claimed, for the next period of time, was communication. "One of the reasons we are having these meetings is we've seen a gap in communications and we want to be more a part of the community," said Stubbs. The school board understands that there is a need for better communication, but seem to have no plan for how to make that happen.

There is a big gap between administration and teachers and Matthew Ogburn,

a 3rd-grade teacher at Riverview Elementary who attended the meeting, has some great solutions to the feedback gap problem.

"What if there's a missing role? I believe there is. I don't want to get rid of the system we have, but I would like to put our eyes on a more student-centered role, that also has a feedback loop, that also has checks and balances" said Ogburn. Although interested in how to make the systems in place better, the defensive nature of the interchange between school board members and Ogburn made it seem like nothing could be done. The stubborn nature of protocols and agendas allows for minimal change and when Ogburn discussed his new plan, he was met with some trepidation.

"There needs to be communication and cooperation, but each level does a necessary job" said Stubbs.

The parents present also brought their questions and concerns to the table. As students, we don't always know how parents will react and what their roles are within the district, so it was interesting to gain some of their perspectives.

"It seems like there's a lack of strategic vision and culture for the district between the schools and it seems like you could be raising the bar. Just listening in the last thirty minutes, there's a lot of defensiveness, and that's not really a visionary or leadership approach at all. I think that there's a lot of opportunities for parents to get involved. I've volunteered for every other school and it's never been as difficult as it is at the high school. You have a way for the community to volunteer and to be cemented in education and that isn't being utilized, and I'm shocked" said an anonymous parent.

In defense of the district, they do sound eager to work with schools to solidify a mission, and these public meetings are a step in the right direction.

"We're working with Mr. Hoerl and other community members to revise the mission statement because it's been a long time since it has been revised and we feel a real need to hear from the community about what can we do better and how can we put that into the vision. I'd like a fourth grader to be able to cite our mission statement, and right now it's a little unwieldy" said Stephanie Moran, Vice President of the school board.

The obvious failure that was School Vault is also an area of contention in the district at the moment. Ogburn stated that he gave the same district assessment, administered through School Vault, to his highest scoring and lowest scoring reading students, and they scored the exact same, proving the application's inadequacy as a learning tool.

"I actually tested it for multiple years, and I'm sorry, it didn't work. Unless you've tested it, I would refrain from saying that it does" said Ogburn in regards to School Vault.

School Vault - for those who don't know, was an attempt at a site that helped both teacher and student academic success, developed by both Durango and Bayfield school districts. It clearly failed, as we aren't using the program in the district. At the school board meeting, we inquired about the failure of School Vault, and how much it cost. The cost, alarmingly, was 1.83 million dollars, according to a parent present at the meeting. Her claim was not denied by any of the school board members. 1.83 million dollars. Yes, you read that right. And somehow, the little acknowledgment of its disappearance has been somewhat swept under the rug. As students, we only remember logging in to our School Vault portals a select number of times, and to be honest, it seemed like an unnecessary additional resource.

School Board *continued on page 29*

LGBTQ community needs DHS support



MO MURRAY
Editor

On the surface, Durango High School presents itself as a relatively accepting place for LGBTQ students. Many classrooms have a “safe space” sticker outside the door, indicating that the classroom within is inclusive and accepting of students who identify on the spectrum. While most LGBTQ students within the school agree that they feel safe in regards to being open about their sexual identity, national statistics and a lack of support and recognition that goes beyond a small rainbow sticker paint a different picture of what it means to attend DHS as an LGBTQ individual.

The most recent study conducted by the Human Rights Campaign indicates that out of thousands of LGBTQ teenagers across the nation, “only 26 percent say they always feel safe in their school classrooms -- and just five percent say all of their teachers and school staff are supportive of LGBTQ people.”

While it is likely that more than 26 percent of these students feel safe in our classrooms, you’d be hard pressed to find any LGBTQ youth who hasn’t experienced at least one homophobic conflict. Although incidents of direct homophobia in DHS are isolated and rare, they do occur and can cause lasting damage to mental health, social life, and things like test scores and GPA. When this does happen, having an adult to trust and confide in provides significant help to students in crisis after having experienced a homophobic attack.

Despite the numerous “safe space” indicators throughout the high school, most members of the LGBTQ community in DHS reported that they did not feel there was an adult in the school they would feel comfortable approaching if they were distressed after a homophobic act was committed against them. Out of the few teachers listed as a known safe space, none of them work within security, administration, or the counselling office.

Additionally, although LGBTQ students experience harassment and bullying leading to an almost 77% depression rate, no member of the DHS LGBTQ community could say that they had ever been educated or seen their peers being educated on LGBTQ issues, or that any anti-bullying campaign or video seen at the high school included a discussion of LGBTQ topics.

What this really means is that though we have scratched the surface for equal treatment of LGBTQ students in DHS, inclusivity is an ongoing battle, and it requires more than a generic “safe space” label to create lasting change. The most sustainable way to make a difference and encourage students and staff to celebrate diversity rather than resort to indifference or intolerance is to take the time to educate.

The old cliché rings true; people fear what they do not know. Years of a lack of education on the struggles and the rich history of the LGBTQ community has led to an ignorance that breeds hate within our schools. This community has existed since ancient times, faced thousands of years of discrimination, and created some of the most powerful political movements in history. Up to 6.8% of adult Americans identify as LGBTQ (about 12% of the US population are African American, about 1% are Native American). Yet, not one course any student has taken has ever included a real discussion about LGBTQ issues, and not one student could report that their sexual education class included LGBTQ specific instruction. This expansive minority group was a part of history long before we established public schools, and will be there until humanity ceases to exist.

If administrators and teachers can take the time to educate themselves or include even basic discussions about LGBTQ history and what it means to identify on the spectrum, they will be able to deconstruct the idea that heterosexuality is the “norm”, more accurately support students in crisis, and truly impact the lives of young LGBTQ students.

School Board *continued from page 28*

“Whether you think it was a horrible mistake, a little mistake, a big mistake, where are we now? How can we make communications better, and how can we meet your needs going forward. Because we can beat up the past, and sometimes you need to learn about the future, but right now we’re in a pretty good position in the district, we’ve got a lot of things going for us” said Stubbs.

To conclude, we went into the meeting fully expecting to write an unbiased and objective piece simply going over what was discussed. However, the events of the

meeting left us less than impressed and we felt it was crucial to share our reaction. We think it is admirable that the school board wants to move forward with a focus on communication and community involvement, but these claims seemed empty. Through a continued relationship with students and families, we truly believe that progress can be made toward a less divided and contentious environment in the district.

Audio of Coffee with the School Board can be found on eldiablone.com

SUSPENDED: OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSION IS UNJUSTIFIED AND UNNECESSARY



BRYN VALDEZ
Sports Editor

There's no denying it: disciplinary action policies are under fire now, more than ever.

With the ever-growing tidal wave of demand for increased school security, schools are scrambling for ways to appease the masses, DHS included. However, it has recently come to light that students' so-called safety is being favored over their realistic well-being, and the relentless mentality behind security measures has gotten out of hand.

Time and time again, the administration has assured the student body that their safety is the top priority, and they are taking all precautions necessary to protect it. The problem with this ideology though, is that it has shown to easily get sidetracked, and soon favors frequent and rigid suspensions over trivial matters, in place of realistic precautions. Every year that passes brings an increase in suspensions and even expulsion over things that administration wouldn't have given a second thought five years ago. In January, for example, So. Baxter Moore was suspended over posting a "kill list" of his closest friends, who were present, on the theatre call board. When administration found the list, Moore was suspended for five days, missing all of his finals and the underclassmen gala, he was scheduled to appear in.

At first glance, this instance would hardly seem out of line, but an issue arises with the fact that the list was a joke between friends, a fact which the "victims" stated to administration repeatedly, even going to so far as to write a parent-endorsed letter explaining the situation.

The school policy itself even states that all victims and witnesses of an instance warranting disciplinary action should be interviewed, however So. Sophie Schiavone one of the students on the list, stated that the administration failed to interview anyone or proceed with any further investigation of the matter.

Additionally, Moore never received a formal citation for the basis of his suspension or an alternative to it.

In many cases students will be offered restorative justice, in-school behavioral counseling, "We brought [restorative justice] in to help curb the number of days and get students back into the classroom . . . It's meant to work together so you can get the education you need and also decrease the suspension days, so if it is an offense that would be a five day suspension, if a student is willing to take restorative justice we can take it down to three days," said Assistant Principal, Amy Schwartz. Yet with Moore's suspension, one that seemed fitting for the offense, he was still required to spend 5 crucial days at home, making up his finals later.

Schwartz also stated that each offense has a formal title, each documented in a shared matrix between administration. This matrix is constantly changing, but essentially outlines the different offenses and their tentative punishments. While administration uses this a guideline to discipline, many of the real-life cases do not exactly fall under one classification, leaving much of the judgment to the assistant principals themselves.

This creates a level of erratically to punishments and makes them somewhat subjective to the which administrator is doing the reprimanding. It seems as though all information is not consistently reviewed with each case that arises, such as a clean record through middle school and good grades in Moore's case.

In another situation, an anonymous DHS student received three days of OSS for indirect involvement in an altercation among friends. Similarly to Moore's case, no outside witnesses were consulted, although the student's punishment was reduced from five days to three, given the fact he complied to participating in restorative justice.

"Having this suspension tanked me in school. When I got back I had absolutely no idea what was going on in any of my classes, and I was remarkably behind. This is not a good place to be in because when all your thinking of is the work you have to catch up on, your not really thinking about what is currently being taught to you. I wish I could have spent the time that I used catching up to actually learn something new," said the student.

Almost every student that has been subject to OSS is in agreement; DHS administration uses suspensions a weak excuse for actual reformation, and at the end of the day they are doing more harm than good. It is past due for a reassessment of how the school system handles discipline, with student's practical safety and education in mind.

Hoerl is what's right with DHS admin

CAROLINE KNIGHT
Head Editor

In my three and a half years at DHS, there's been an undeniable communication gap between 9R administration and the teachers and students affected by their decision making. Such a gap is natural to some extent, but a lack of acknowledgment from the district about its existence leaves teachers and students feeling largely unheard and deeply frustrated.

The gap has only grown wider in recent months, following Durango 9R Superintendent Dan Snowberger's spat with the Durango Herald - which began as a bizarre denial of police reports and is ending in a potential lawsuit - a call from parents and staff of the 9R district for Snowberger to resign amidst discrepancies in his resume, and outrage from DHS students over what they deem to be unfair and inconsistent suspension policies.

The school board (who decided to reinstate Snowberger for an additional year and grant him a 2% raise), Snowberger, and 9R administration have dealt with public frustration by keeping their heads down and plowing forward. And without acknowledgment of wrongdoing or even acknowledgment of frustration, the gap between administration and students will only continue to widen.

As a DHS student, and especially as one who has followed and been affected by our administration's failures and successes for almost four years, I've found that sometimes the most effective efforts by the administration to reach out to the student body are also the most simple.

A good school Principal, for example, is in many ways a bridge between the gap separating administration and teachers because they have the unique task of working face to face with both. A good principal is approachable, accessible, and has a student's best interests always at the forefront in their decision making. For the administration's part, they made a great hire in Jon Hoerl.

When I was a freshman in high school, during the 2015-2016 school year, I didn't know who our principal was until May, when someone pointed her out to me in the

final days of the school year.











In contrast, on the first day of the 2016-2017 school year, Mr. Hoerl ran in front of the crowd in the demon mascot costume and gave the student body free t-shirts. He's there to open the door for me every morning and to ask if I had pancakes for breakfast (because he remembers the one time months ago that I brought pancakes to school) and if you need to ask him a quick question, he's easy to find in the commons during passing periods.

During my sophomore year, when our journalism adviser announced that he was leaving, Mr. Hoerl let me and the other head editor of El Diablo play an active role in the hiring process of his replacement, allowing us to ask questions during interviews and discuss the pros and cons of each candidate with him. The experience gave us both an idea of what it's like to be on the other side of interviews and gave me a good outline for dos and don'ts as I started my college applications.

One thing Mr. Hoerl has stressed in his three years at DHS is the importance of building relationships between students and teachers. If students feel that there is at least one adult in the building they can go to with problems, that should be considered a victory.

For me, that teacher is Krista Karpel, who lets me bother her almost daily even though I don't have classes with her anymore, but I feel confident that I could go to almost any teacher I've had in the last four years and they would be willing to sit down and listen. I think that kind of environment in a high school is extremely important, and I know it isn't the same experience for everyone, but I don't consider myself alone in mine. The fact that we have a staff that's always working to make positive steps forward and a principal who has their back speaks volumes to me and makes me proud to be a demon.

There are some undeniable communication issues within our district, but within DHS, everybody is on the same team. The team captain, Mr. Hoerl, is making DHS a better place to work, learn, and grow, and the students and staff here are grateful for it.

Number of Sexual Partners	SEXUAL EXPOSURE CHART (if every person has only the same number of partners as you)	Number of People Exposed to
1		1
2		3
3		7
4		15
5		31
6		63
7		127
8		255
9		511
10		1023

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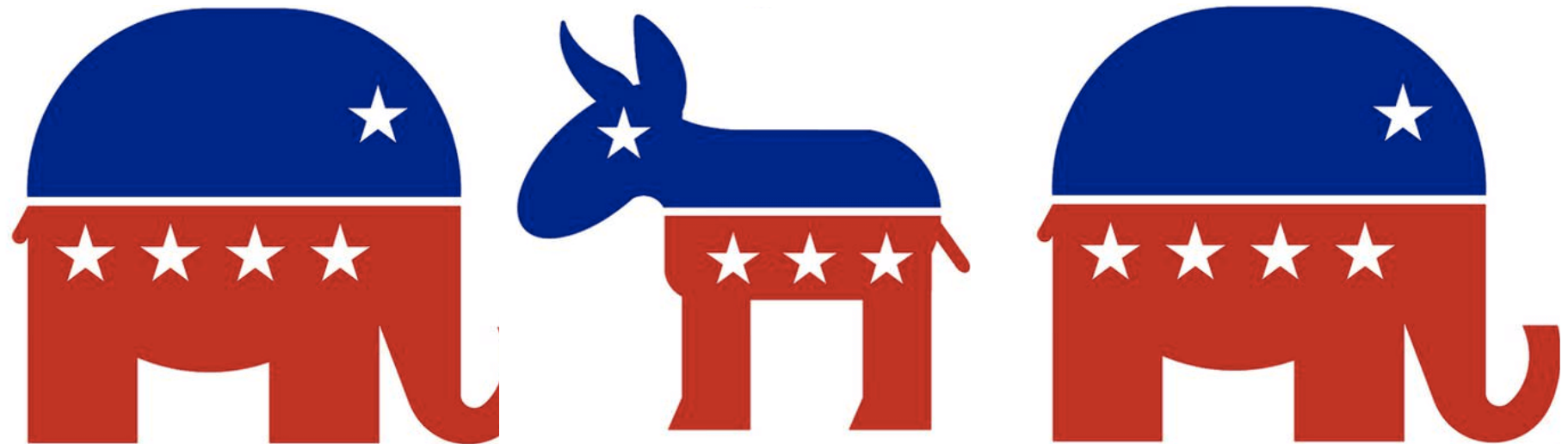
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“Conservative” is not a dirty word



W

ords such as racist, bigot, misogynist, extremist and many more have become a way to express hatred for the Republican party and their policies. Believe me, most of us are not racist bigots often expressing how much we hate the #metoo movement or other progressive developments. I am not here to advocate for those who may feel victimized by these phrases, but instead to raise awareness for a group of students who may feel disenfranchised by fellow peers who don't share the same ideologies.

What I have witnessed from spending time in both a conservative and a liberal town is that we both don't know what each group truly believes in and what they are like.

No, conservatives are not all gun wielding, confederate flag waving racists, and we do not believe in the abolition of immigration in the U.S. or the continual abuse of women in both sexual and violent means. Rather, we are a group who upholds the rights our country was built on, like the rights of the natural born citizen through due process.

Liberals, too, are not young pot smoking hippies letting anyone and everyone over our borders and taking away our right to feel safe. Rather, they are a group of people that believe in progress and not being stuck in our often questionable history as a nation.

I know I don't speak on behalf of both parties, this is only a rough representation of their beliefs from what I have experienced by socializing with different people.

I most closely relate with conservatives, especially in the ideas that I have expressed, and I often feel uncomfortable talking about it among both students and staff, much like many students who share the same ideologies. Some feel like their opinions aren't heard or appreciated around their friends and especially in their classroom.

"Sharing your opinions in class is usually never listened to and you tend to get

LUKE SWIFT
Reporter

yelled at by students or are told you are a racist or just hate everyone else. But teachers usually have a more knowledgeable reason behind whether they disagree with you or not," said a DHS student who wished to remain anonymous.

However, some feel comfortable sharing their opinions but are constantly afraid they are going to offend someone else or be profiled by certain stereotypes.

"I feel comfortable when talking about it, but I try to present in a way so that I don't offend anyone or be considered something as silly as a racist just because I believe in securing our borders," said anonymous 2.

Both students declined for their names to be mentioned in the article.

We are supposed to come to school for a safe space to discuss whatever beliefs or ideas we may have and be comfortable knowing that those ideas/beliefs would be accepted by our fellow peers and teachers. That's what makes this a democracy...right?

How can we say "we support each other" and "take pride in each other" if we can't even feel safe saying what we believe without being ridiculed by fellow students?

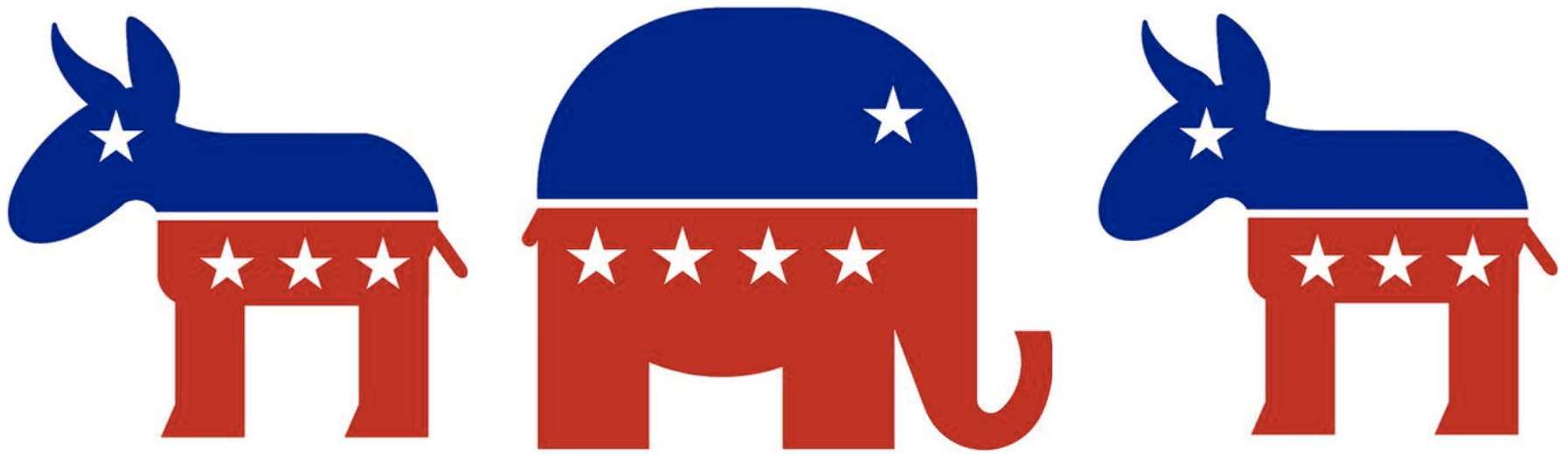
Some teachers are trying to combat the division between students by using healthy evidence packed debates. This allows students to formally talk to one another without feeling unsafe about what they may say.

"I do have a wide diversity of opinions in my class, so one way I approach (politics) is we have time for students to speak their opinion. I don't allow debates and I don't allow two students to speak at the same time. But at the same time I like to challenge the viewpoints of any students and demand they bring in evidence to support it," said social studies teacher Edward Cash.

A message to all students, liberal and conservative, try to be open to both ideas and both sides, because as I have realized, it is far worse to be closed minded than to be aware of the world and its many cultures, ideas and people.

Therefore, instead of rolling over our friends and fellow students, let's encourage healthy discussions, like many teachers at the high school, by challenging differing opinions and your own opinions to make up your own mind rather than someone else's.

MAGA mob mentality is dangerous



In a sea of red and white, teenagers hide behind bright hats with the words “Make America Great Again”. With high testosterone levels and changing bodies filled with aggression and a lack of sympathy, young Trump supporters have been using this new identity of “MAGA” to justify their ignorance and hate. With their idol being the president of the United States, it’s easy for them to cross the line of right and wrong in the name of “freedom” as their leader has done many times before.

A recent example of this behavior would be after the Indigenous Peoples March at the Lincoln Memorial when a Native American Vietnam Veteran was harassed by a crowd of teenagers in MAGA hats, chanting “build the wall”. First of all...what? How would building a wall prevent a Native American from peacefully playing an instrument to show respect for his culture? Obviously these boys confused this mans race, showing complete ignorance and racism.

A lot of this can be related to a mob mentality since there’s a good chance none of the high schoolers would have antagonized an innocent man if they had been on their own. And that’s exactly what MAGA culture provides for young Trump supporters: a mob to hide behind. This is incredibly harmful for many reasons.

The long term saying of “boys will be boys” will be taken to a new level. If teenagers begin to feel like their actions are not only justified but backed up by the president, they will begin to try and push the boundaries. Trump has displayed racist, sexist, and ignorant ideas and has basically gotten away with it consequence free. What kind of example is he leading by for impressionable young men?

White 18-25 year old males have already been statistically getting away with date rape and rape, according to The Guardian, only 1/3rd of reported assaults result in a conviction- and lets not forget the thousands of assaults that happen that go

GILLIAN HOLMGREN
Head Online Editor

unreported.

Everyone has heard the vulgar ways Trump has spoken about women, and his many sexual assault accusations that he has accumulated over the years. Trump is providing a “hero” to young republicans, supporting disgusting views of women. Obviously this has had some disturbing results.

The National Women’s Law Center (NMLC), a non-profit founded in 1972 reports that after the 2016 presidential election, “there was a marked increase across the incidents of harassment triggered by hate, with more than 40 percent occurring in elementary and secondary schools or colleges. Many girls face overlapping forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, national origin, disability, gender identity and/or sexual orientation.”

In the first example, it displays a clear and disgusting show of racism. The boys dont even truly understand what they are saying when they chant at the native american man “build a wall” but because Trump has said the same thing over and over again, they think it’s the right thing to do.

Trump’s actions and ideals are harmful for adults, but when boys and teenagers are bewildered with his words, either from their parents, their friends, or the T.V., it takes harmful to the next level. Teenagers, especially young males, are very easily manipulated and when given the opportunity to express some of their aggression, especially when they know there will be no consequences, they take it, and then some.

MAGA culture in young men and adolescents is extremely harmful because it provides a safe outlet for them to express their opinions hidden behind the rest of Trump’s supporters. It allows them to act out and possibly harass or harm someone in the name of Trump. If Trump continues to get away with his actions, teenaged Trump supporters will continue to follow his lead.

One year since Parkland: what has changed?

CHLOE RAGSDALE
Lifestyle Editor

On April 20, 1999, 15 people were shot and killed at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colorado. On December 14, 2012, 28 people were shot and killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. On February 14, 2018, 17 people were shot and killed at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The names of these schools have haunted our lives, echoed through our schools as books have clattered to floors in our hallways and stopped our beating hearts as we wonder if we will be next.

As Stoneman Douglas High School student and advocate for gun control, David Hogg, says, “we say no more.”

Students like Hogg, who is one of the 187,000 students to have experienced a school shooting in the US, have ignited the March for our Lives movement, where they have used their raw emotion and personal horrors to fuel lawmakers throughout the country to make changes.

According to The Sun Sentinel, 2018 has been a year for change in terms of gun control laws, with triple the number of laws enacted than in 2017. 19 businesses have cut their ties with the NRA, six local governments in Florida have taken action to change gun laws, and ten companies have ended ties with other companies that produce guns, as well as have stopped their promotion of guns.

16 states have tightened their gun laws or improved their school safety, which doesn't include Colorado, who still fails to provide universal background checks to buyers, even after the horrifying 2012 shooting in Aurora, Colorado where 12 people were shot and killed in a movie theater by a man with a history of very threatening mental illnesses who purchased his guns legally. The most recent example of the failed nature of background checks was on February 15, where a man shot and killed five people at Henry Pratt Company plant in Aurora, Illinois with a gun he was not legally allowed to own due to a history of domestic violence.

Background checks are a highly controversial issue that have been advocated for for many years, even before the uprisings of mass shootings in the most recent decade. However, there's one powerhouse stopping it from becoming a nationwide law: the NRA, who are fighting to oppose background checks because “they don't really work” and are a “trap for unwary gun owners”.

This is partially correct, where background checks have failed to prevent dangerous people from accessing guns, but that's only because of the seemingly loose nature of the policy. The many flaws of background checks include the dismissal of the buyer's social media presence, which can be a primary source of suspicion, especially in modern times where social media dictates most of the news read by high school students. Nikolas Cruz, the shooter at Stoneman Douglas High School, blatantly stated online that he was “going to be a professional school shooter,” though this failed to be reported when he bought a gun due to the vagueness of background checks.

Background checks aren't the only factor that needs to be tightened in order to prevent mass shootings from striking the country as frequently as they have; the issue also lies within our schools and our present and former classmates.

“The word ‘just’ is tricky. Sometimes kids just have bad days. But sometimes they're tipping over or they feel like there's nothing else, so they're a bit suicidal or homicidal,” said the Safety and Security Director of the Durango 9R School District, Kathy Morris.

When it comes to a school's safety against imagined threats, Morris claims the problem lies between heavy profiling of students and a general lack of knowledge

about the mental issues of these suspected teens.

This identification of a future “killer”, using programs such as threat assessment screenings, lies within the hands of not only school counselors, but also in the hands of students, who need to take more initiative to report suspicious incidents, using sources such as Safe2Tell, as Morris highly encourages.

However, this applies even more pressure to already overwhelmed high school students, where according to Everytown for Gun Safety, 75% of them find the threat of a school shooting their primary source of stress, and rightfully so, as two hundred and eighty-eight school shootings have occurred in the US since 2009, which is about one school shooting every eight school days.

Fear is the propelling factor that decides the safety decisions implemented into schools, such as the I Love You Guys foundation, created by Ellen and John-Michael Keys after their daughter Emily was killed in a school shooting, which gives quick and simple explanations to students and teachers during an emergency.

Despite the implementation of these posters throughout schools and the prominence of school shootings across the country, students still have a seemingly careless and relaxed response to apparent lock-down drills, regardless of the fact that the word “drill” is not always the case. The truth is that no one can genuinely act with sincerity during a drill unless they've experienced the horror themselves, as this very realistic and common threat is still so hard to comprehend to those who haven't personally been through it, and using fear to propel this response in preparation for the real threat is questionable.

“Anytime you shift a culture, you're going to have pushback. How do you shift that culture without using fear?” said Morris, highlighting the idea of a fear factor that is now so prominent in our society today, and how that changes the idea of a school for most students into a place of worry for their own lives.

In order to provide safer schools for the children of America, the answer lies in balancing many aspects of American life; the balance of those who love their guns and those who despise them; the balance of those who use fear to implement change or simply disregard the issue to instill a sense of peace; the balance of hyper-stereotyping students or maintaining a sense of carelessness towards a student's mental health.

Kathy Morris uses this idea of balance when thinking about the future of schools in the Durango 9R School District. She hopes to provide a more secure campus by defending the front entrance with a system of “buzzing in”, adding door sensors to the West Wing, providing more direct training to all students and teachers, arming trained security guards, and possibly even closing off-campus lunch to freshman.

This sense of premature action is what we need now more than ever in American schools, as the powerhouse that is the NRA is seemingly impossible and highly unrealistic to relent against, and those who support the outdated Second Amendment have their rights as American citizens to be protected under these laws. However, this does not mean that students should feel unsafe in their own schools, a place designated for growth and opportunity, as the threat of being killed grows more and more likely the longer we refuse to take action against the rise of illegally purchased and unnecessary guns, such as shotguns or machine guns, in the US.

Although this spark of fury only seems to ignite after more and more students are shot and killed in their own schools, it is essential to keep the spark alive and raging in order to produce a true and long-lasting change in our country. We can't preemptively wait for these horrific events to strike our country until we make changes; we have to act quickly and diligently in order to prevent any more of our children, mothers, fathers, friends, and futures from being lost by a single shot.

KEEP AMERICA GREAT

JACK BREEZLEY
Reporter

A recent study by the Bureau of Labour Statistics shows that unemployment has dropped to a half-century record low. This low is at 3.7%, and is exactly at the two year anniversary of President Trump's time in the White House.

Republicans long sought to retake the White House after former President Obama's eight years there, and with Trump in the Oval Office now, Republicans can take their turn to help create a greater good for the citizens of the United States. In the two years Trump has been in office, many beneficial plans for the American people have been put in play, making Trump one of the greatest U.S. presidents.

Unemployment has dropped by a whopping 1.2% since Trump has taken office. As a result over 4.7 million jobs have been added to our economy, 143,000 between September 1st and October 1st in 2018 and a bonus 308,000 since the New Year began. The unemployment doesn't stop there, however.

African Americans benefited greatly from this record low unemployment. Black unemployment fell to a record low of 5.9% in October of 2018, suggested by the Bureau of Labour Statistics. So how did all of this occur?

While Trump has been in office, his plans, including tariffs on China, have vastly created a tougher and stronger economy. These economic plans, and not to mention tax cuts and Nato taxes, have allowed businesses to earn more, and open more job opportunities.

President Trump is averaging 206,000 new jobs a month, a huge step up on former President Obama's measly 130,000 jobs, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics. Hourly wages have gone up to, a result of the Chinese tariffs.

These tariffs, or taxes on imported Chinese goods, allow the U.S. to earn more money off of trade, which greatly benefits our economy. One benefit of these tariffs is the increase in average hourly wages. According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, average hourly earnings for private sectors of jobs are at \$27.56, up an outstanding 3.2% in the last year alone.

Labour force participation has also made an incredible recovery from historic lows during the Obama Presidency. People working between the ages of 24 and 54 has jumped nearly 2% since the end of the Obama Administration.

Because of this economic growth, Baby Boomers have been able to retire in huge numbers, and with more financial stability. Along with tariffs, one more reason the economy is booming is because of our NATO tax. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty

Organization) is an alliance between some European and North American countries. All of the countries involved, such as Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and France have to pay taxes that go towards NATO causes.

For far too long, the US has been paying an unfair amount of the taxes, at nearly 20% total. With the new deals President Trump has put in place, this lowers the US tax to the same as the other countries involved, leading to more money to spend on the American people.

Approval ratings are very important for all Presidents. 56% of veterans support President Trump's position, but that should be higher. The recent government shut-down has lowered approval ratings, but more actions are necessary at our Southern Border such as a wall or increased Border Patrol Agents to keep the American People safe.

Along with Great Britain and other World Powers, Trump has expressed support for Juan Guaido as the rightful president of Venezuela. For too long, socialism has torn Venezuela citizens apart, with inflation reaching 80,000% in 2018 according to Forbes. "A bag of pasta costs a weeks earnings," according to NPR. The average citizen has lost 24 pounds due to starvation because of high food prices according to Forbes

To top it all off, according to the Intelligencer, a baby born in Syria has a better chance of living to age 3 than a baby born in Venezuela. Yes, you read that right, and Juan Guaido promises to change Venezuela for the better if put in power. it is important that Trump has expressed support for Guaido, because the two can put an end to the humanitarian crisis occurring inside Venezuela.

One of the most immediate issues faced by President Trump was the escalating situation in North Korea. After long, arduous planning and meetings, a second summit between Kim Jong Un, the North Korean leader and President Trump is planned. N. Korea has agreed to lower its amount of nuclear weapons, something many presidents have ignored.

Finally, a bill introduced by Trump to help reform the Criminal Justice System was passed unanimously by Congress. This bill gives prisoners, once released better opportunities to find jobs and restart life after prison.

With all of these great things done by President Trump, it is hard to say he is not a good president despite what the left-leaning mainstream media say. The facts back up the arguments, and there is no denying it. Now that America is great again, we must Keep America Great and by voting Trump in 2020!

Sands of Oman: Margy Dudley's new installation

P

hotography has the ability to transport the viewer to an entirely different place and tell unique stories in a way that words alone cannot begin to express. Margy Dudley is a local photojournalist who documented her recent excursion to a country called Oman in a series of pictures that encapsulate her experience in this hidden gem of the Middle East.

Dudley's new photographic exhibit at the Durango Arts Center, the Sands of Oman, reveals the beautiful diversity found in a geographical region generally painted with a broad brush of violence and terror.

Oman is a small haven in the midst of Middle Eastern turmoil and conflict, which is why Dudley decided to seek it out and discover how it has remained such a peaceful oasis within the war-torn desert.

"I would say that Oman, actually was one of the safest countries that I've ever traveled to," said Dudley, "The media will tell you generalizations about, let's say, the Middle East, but I like to find out for myself."

Oman's peaceful nature is especially surprising due to its close proximity to Yemen and Saudi Arabia, two countries so well known for violence and conflict. Dudley set out to discover why it remains an island in the center of such chaos.

"The Sultan uses the [oil and gas] money for infrastructure. Money goes into schools, into hospitals, and into healthcare. It seems that everyone has a house and a car and a job. It is progressive; women can vote, they can drive. They can leave the house without a man, they cover their hair but they don't have to cover their faces," said Dudley.

These factors undoubtedly are to be credited for the integritous and neutral nature of Oman. A large contributing factor to the conflict found in the Middle East is the ancient division and hostility between Sunni and Shia Muslims; this characteristic aspect of many middle eastern countries does not afflict the peaceful society of Oman.

"The Sunni and Shia Muslims could pray in the same mosques," said Dudley, "and that's huge. So these things along with the proper use of oil and gas money, have created an incredibly safe society."

RUSH WEBSTER
Arts Editor

Aside from the lack of danger and the tranquility of this Middle Eastern sanctuary, Margy found many other alluring aspects of Oman that prompted her to take this photojournalistic expedition through the region. When taking her pictures, the question arose of what image she wanted to paint of Oman with her pictures. What story does she want to tell? What perception of Oman does she want her audience to take away?

"I wanted to capture the beautiful side of a place that we hear so much negative news about, and I would say the people too. In my photographs my story would be the beauty of the place; it's a story about place - a visual story. At first I was just going to do this famous desert called the Empty Quarter. I was going to just have pictures of sand dunes and have it be very abstract, but there was so much else that I didn't want to limit it to just sand dunes," said Dudley.

The process of choosing which photos that were to be included in the exhibit was an arduous and very particular one, for both the photos chosen to display as well as the order and placement of said photos shaped the manner in which Oman was portrayed.

"Working with Ms. Dudley prior to hanging, we arranged the photographs in a manner that tells a story as the viewer moves around the space. Her photography transports us to Oman with a sensibility to a life and an environment, unfamiliar to most of us," said Leesa Zarinelli Gawlik, one of six curators of Friends of the Art Library (FOAL) within the Durango Arts Center.

While each picture tells its own individual story and reveals a different aspect of life in Oman, the one photo that best encapsulates Dudley's experiences depicts her Omani guide surrounded by sand dunes of the Empty Quarter bathed in the soft, tranquil light of dawn.

"I would have to say [my favorite photograph] is the title photograph, just because it is the one I picked to represent it all," said Dudley.

Ultimately, the Sands of Oman photographic exhibit showcases an entirely unique perspective of a geographic region that many of us have never had the opportunity to see. It exposes a depiction of the Middle east that challenges the popular threatening perception of the region that we are used to and forces the viewer to test their own inadvertently biased perspective. This showcase is available for viewing at the Durango Arts Center through March 9th, Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Art Chart

BY: GWEN AND RUSH	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	MISC.	OUR OPINION	OVERALL RATING
Food Thai Kitchen	Their Pad Thai is incredible!	The location is hard to find.	It is located beneath Alpine Bank.	Pick up some carry-out for a delicious night in.	
Movies The Oscars	Bradley Cooper and Lady Gaga performing.	Bradley Cooper has a significant other.	The Crazy Rich Asians cast looked amazing.	A perfect way to spend that Sunday night.	
Women's Fashion Vests	A fashionable way to keep warm in cool temps.	They are popular with grandmas.	Patagonia has some really cute ones!	Do not wear them with short sleeves please!	
Men's Fashion Windbreaker	They are super lightweight and go with everything.	They make a lot of noise when you move.	Most popular brands carry them.	You must wear something underneath.	
Gossip Kylie K and Jordyn W	All of the funny memes on social media.	The Kardashians are yet again the center of attention.	People are jokingly "trying-out" to be Kylie's new BFF.	It was a publicity stunt to make money!	
Activities Backcountry Skiing	Skiing fresh tracks!? Yes please!	There is a risk of avalanches!	You will need to get "skins" for your skis.	Lots of cardio, but worth it!	

VAMPIRE WEEKEND'S NEW ALBUM BLEEDS INDIE POP EXCELLENCE

MADDY GLEASON
Head Features Editor

For nearly six years, fans of the beloved band Vampire Weekend have anticipated the release of a new album, which has 18 songs. For several years, members of the band have been dropping hints that hopefully a new album will be officially released.

On January 17, Ezra Koenig, the lead of the band, announced in an instagram post that 2 songs will be released three times a month, and that the album will be called FOTB.

In an interview with Pitchfork, Koenig hinted that the “next album is pushing in a lot of different directions.”

Until the first song dropped on Thursday, Jan 24, fans eagerly tried to figure out what FOTB stood for. Among the guesses were Fresh off the Boat, Flight of the Bumblebee, and countless others. Finally, Koenig announced the drop of the first two songs, 2021 and Harmony Hall, along with the name of the album, Father of the Bride.

Vampire Weekend has nearly 4 million monthly listeners on spotify and is categorized as an indie pop band. And although there are many reasons that fans like their music, one main draw for music lovers is the variety of instruments and unique patterns that they utilize in their songs

Junior Rebecca Bowers has been a fan of Vampire Weekend for years after she was introduced to it by her older brother, who is now part of his own band.

“I think Vampire Weekend stands out because there are influences of several different genres and within their music. They incorporate a lot of classical string stuff and some stuff that sounds middle eastern and they make it all work together which I think is really hard to do,” said Bowers.

While the band finds supporters among younger fans, the music is incredibly versatile and has elements that appeal to a number of audiences. Nationally, students, both high school and college, are huge supporters of this band.

“Vampire Weekend has always been one of my favorite bands. The sounds they produce are just so unique and I really enjoy their music. The variety they are able to produce is really cool, and I think they deserve to be put in their own genre,” said

Jr. Cobe Freeburn.

As with any artist, fans yearn to see Vampire Weekend in concert, and, luckily, with the release of this new album, rumors of a tour have started.

“I have never been to a concert, sadly, but maybe they will go on tour for this next album,” said Bowers.

Vampire Weekend has some very popular songs, which, when released, were radio favorites. A-Punk, released in 2007, has 160 million plays on spotify.

“My favorite song of theirs is probably Walcott because my brother played it a lot when he was really into them and it always brings back nice memories,” said Bowers.

“I personally enjoy Diplomat’s Son, it just makes me happy. It reminds me of summer so I really enjoy listening to it,” said Freeburn.

As with any band, Vampire Weekend has produced some songs that don’t resonate with listeners particular well.

“My least favorite is probably California English because it’s kind of an ear-sore,” said Bowers.

“I would have to say that my least favorite is Horchata. It just sounds sort of dinky and it’s not really their usual style,” said Freeburn.

Even the songs that are less favored among fans are musically complex, and despite being less appealing due to their discordant feeling, it’s obvious that the fast and confusing songs are advanced rhythmically.

The band announced in late January that they are in fact touring the country, however, tickets sold out fast.

“I’m pretty busy so I wouldn’t be able to make it, but I think the concert would be fun and the creativity the band displays in their music would definitely come through in the concert,” said Freeburn.

Vampire Weekend is going to all the major cities around the states, and they are in fact coming to red rocks in the fall.

“I got tickets to go, and I can’t wait for this concert! It will be so cool,” said Bowers.

The band has gone on tour before, however, with the highly anticipated release of Father of the Bride, expectations are high, the lines will be long, and fans will (most likely) be satisfied.

Is your favorite artist a pedophile?

Hot and fresh out the kitchen: R Kelly arrested

TODD MURRAY
Reporter

Is your favorite musician a pedophile, sexual assaulting, cult leader? R. Kelly is an R&B Superstar who rose to fame during the early nineties. Though his music has launched his career and gained wide popularity, his fame has resulted in scandal after scandal, painting R. Kelly as a symbol of controversy and, apparently, quite a monster.

There is a contentious timeline throughout R. Kelly's career that started simply with questionable lyrics in some of his songs. The first major controversy that arose was his alleged marriage to a 15-year-old singer named Aaliyah. Even his fans were pretty shocked with the lyrics written in one of his songs for Aaliyah.

"Age ain't nothing but a number, Throwing down ain't nothing but a thang," said Kelly.

R. Kelly's lawyer has come out and said the marriage was legitimate but was Aaliyah's fault because she allegedly lied about her age.

So. Mirah Tullen thinks the whole situation is disturbing.

"I'm disappointed to believe that no charges have been taken seriously to the bad he's done to underage girls," said Tullen.

On February 22, R. Kelly was charged with ten counts of sexual aggravated sexual abuse involving four victims, three of whom were minors. A no-bail arrest warrant has also been issued on him.

One of the most widely known and disturbing allegations R. Kelly has been accused of is being the leader of some supposed abusive underage sex cult.

Ford Pitts thinks there is too much evidence to not pay close attention.

"Weirdly sexual lyrics correlating to a minor all the way to a sexual cult-like relationship with multiple young women raised more than enough red flags for me," said Pitts.

It can be assumed by now that the many accusations against Kelly would likely have brought about further investigation. It wasn't until a recent documentary series titled "Surviving R. Kelly" touching on all of his scandals that a proper investigation began.

So. Sophia Holt is also a DHS student greatly dismayed by R. Kelly and his actions.

"I'm appalled by the whole situation and disgusted at him getting away with it all for 20 plus years," said Holt.

Sophia also thinks R. Kelly falls under what the #MeToo movement has been fighting against.

"I think that in a larger sense, it's a statement on the power and influence that men especially those in a position of power or a celebrity in his case have over children and people," said Holt.

If part of his charges involves the underage sex cult then R. Kelly may be one of the worst cases yet among the #MeToo stories.

Some students at DHS think that R. Kelly is a bad person, but because his dirty deeds aren't looking to be proven, and his music isn't too bad, people should simply move on.

Jr. Jax Bayer despite the overall negativity surrounding Kelly, he doesn't hate him and thinks the scandal is a bit foolish to be looking into at this time.

"I don't hate the man, the "scandal," I think is a little stupid. I don't really think

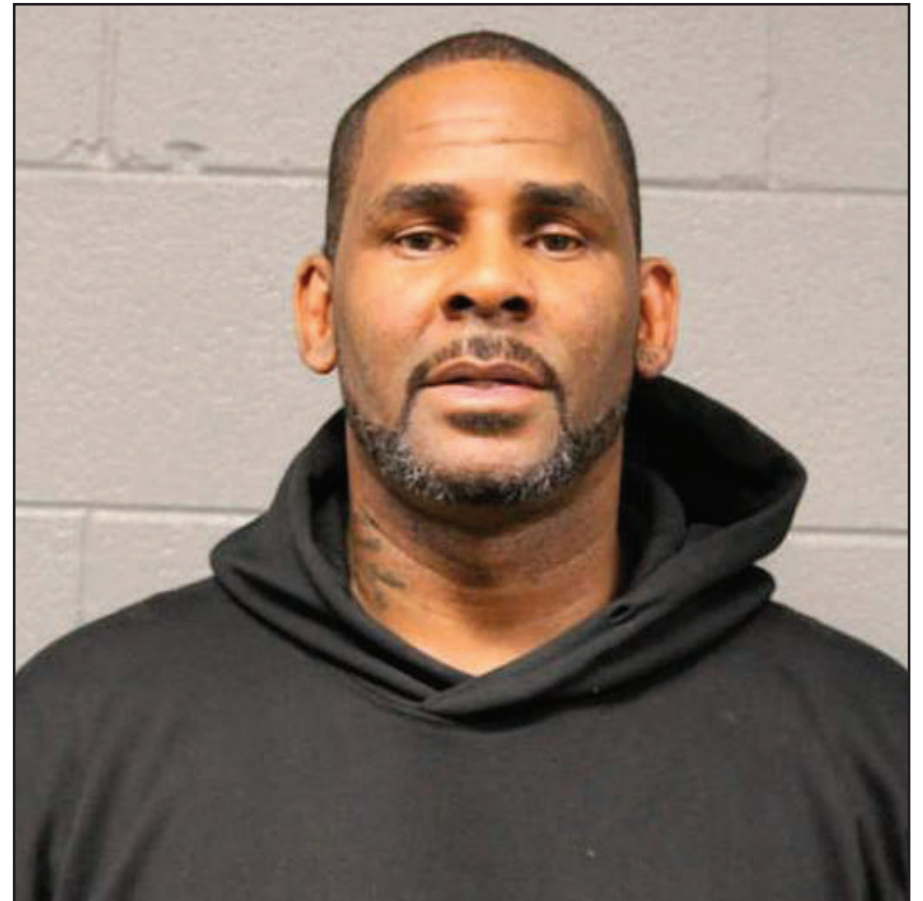
he's relevant at all though," said Bayer.

Until the lifetime documentary was released on him, R. Kelly wasn't really in the spotlight even during the major breakthroughs of the #Metoo movement. For a long time, people have accepted Kelly as a controversial man but one that can seem to dodge whatever was accused of him, so it can be understood if some see him as an irrelevant lost cause.

Sr. Juan Jimenez provides an impartial opinion, agreeing with how the majority of people see Kelly but also admires his music career.

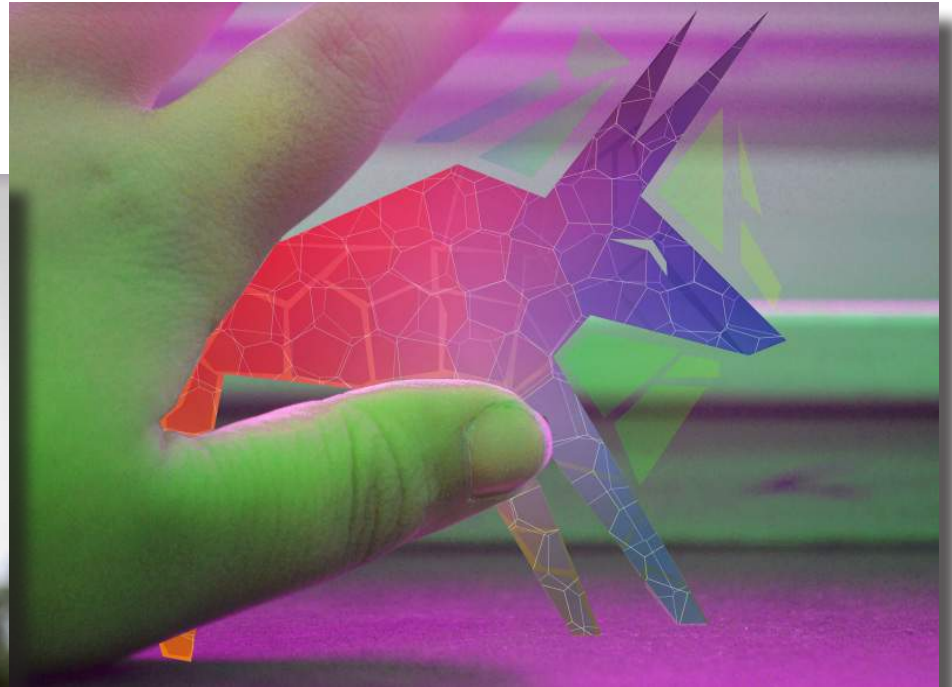
"I don't think he will ever get fully prosecuted, he as a person is bad, but I think that his music is still iconic and you can see that on the internet," said Jimenez. It can be argued that though he seems to be a bad person, it doesn't mean that his music is awful or always reflects his actions. For example, Kanye West has said and done some pretty dodgy things but it doesn't stop people from loving his music, especially from the past. In the course of his music career, Kelly has won three Grammy awards and been nominated for 25.

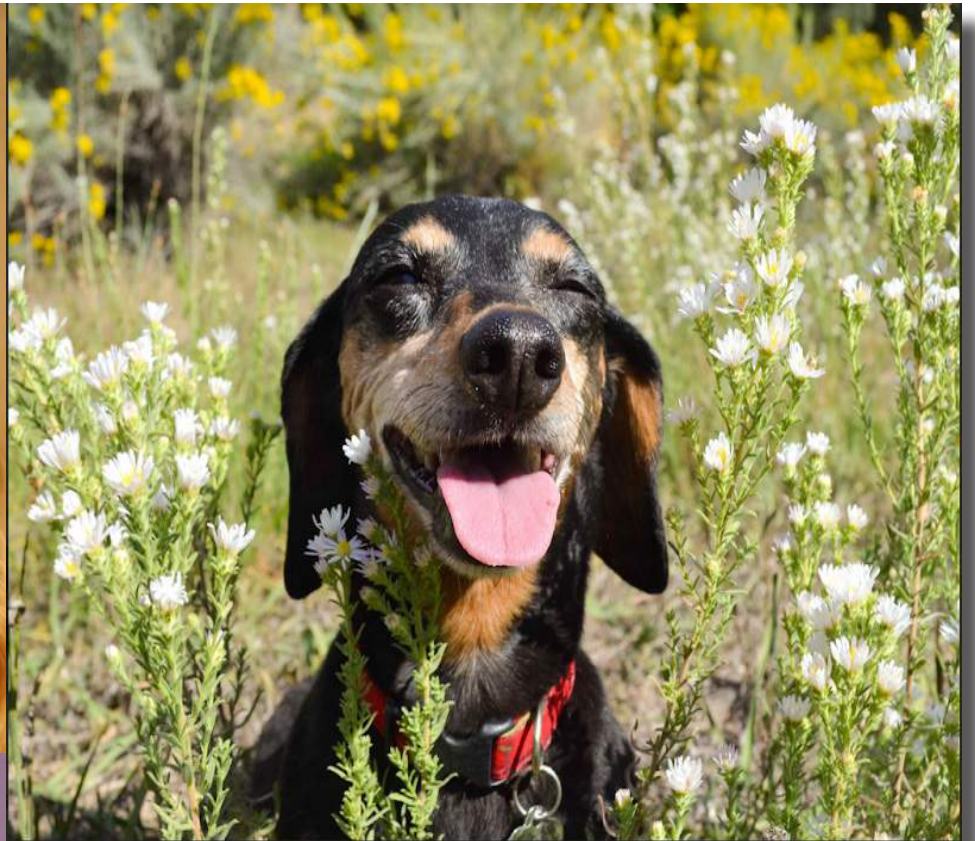
Whether you are glad R. Kelly is now behind bars or believe he is a great musician and he isn't all that relevant, people should be glad that the timeline of scandals is finally over after 25 years.



DHS Photographers shoot their shot

Mrs. Mitchell's digital photography class has nothing but beauty to portray on the fence facing main street by the high school. Below is a preview of some of the photos that are displayed and taken by the class. The photos on the top row (from left to right) are taken by Ian Wright, Madison Marshall and Emily Fiala, Faythe Gillam, Julia Peterson. The bottom row consists of (from left to right), Lydia Dubit, Santiago Cullum, Morgan Mallonee, and Christine Howe.





Humans of Durango

CHLOE RAGSDALE
Lifestyles Editor

Love is possibly the only universal factor that binds the entirety of the planet, the only idea that every single person can connect to. It's presence over our world seems to overcome every challenge, and is commercially celebrated on February 14, a day in which love is represented by mounds of chocolate and bouquets flowers. Despite the hyper-commercialization of this holiday, love supersedes the test of time and presents itself throughout our lives. For this issue, El Diablo asks Durango locals how they define love, hoping to highlight this diverse idea in order to illuminate the love in our lives.

"A person or thing that brings you joy when you see it or hear it, and if it's specifically a person, someone who you can trust with anything. Am I in love? I mean, I'm not sure. I kind of think I am. It's hard to tell. It's hindsight. Maybe in 2020 I'll know. I think when I was younger or like growing up I based love off of movies and stuff cause that's all I knew, but my parents have been together for eighteen years, and my grandparents have been together for sixty years, and I saw the way they acted around each other and that's what love was to me. I mean since it's Valentine's Day, I would say I love my boyfriend most in the world because we've been together almost two years and he's the person I go to when I need anything and everything. He and I have very different views some of the time but we can still see eye to eye and agree on things or just agree to disagree, but I know I couldn't live without my parents and I couldn't live without my sister very easily.

There's that aspect to it." - Sr. Carter Feldman-Marshall

"I think it's just like being able to care for somebody that means a lot to you. I guess I've been in love. It makes me feel like you have somebody to care about and spend time with and do stuff with. It's a good feeling. Right now, I would say I love my mom the most because she cares for me, she took care of me when I was a kid."

"It's all encompassing, what can I say? It's caring, it's a passion, I think it's the ultimate that anybody can give anybody else. I'm in love now. I've been married for fifty seven years. I met my wife and I knew within a year that she would hopefully be my wife, she said yes, and for fifty seven years we've been married. We met on a blind date in a bank in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Thirteen months later we were married in Minneapolis, Minnesota and then moved to Chicago. Fifty seven years."

Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Memes?

SOPHIA ADAMSKI
Reporter

Social media and the internet are present in almost every facet of our lives, especially if you're between the ages of 13-17. Students at DHS use social media to connect with people and activities, such as the El Diablo and Student Council Instagram accounts. Others have taken to these platforms as a way to protest, including the free.dhs account.

According to a study published by the Pew Research Center in the spring of 2018, 95% of teens either have a smartphone or access to one. This means that nearly 50% of teens claim that they're connected to some sort of device almost constantly. Slightly over 24% of the initial group claim social media is harmful in some way, particularly in how it has led to more bullying, the overall spread of rumors, and the damage of personal relationships and human interaction.

The free.dhs meme account, which was deleted on January 16 and since reinstated, is a controversial account that claims that Durango High School's administration is "unjust", with much of the blame falling on Amy Swartz. Ms. Swartz herself responded to this account, first and foremost by acknowledging students' First Amendment rights.

"People have the right for freedom of speech. I understand that, and I also understand that people don't always agree with what the administration does," said Swartz. "I looked over it, partly to get a finger on the pulse of the students who run the account." Ms. Swartz also noted that it was interesting to see both sides of the coin on this issue; taking a look at the comment section under any free.dhs post reveals debates about the administration, their policies, and the subsequent effects on the 9-R District and DHS.

"As an administrator, we have to be aware, that- especially in our position - sometimes people will just be frustrated with us, and find a way to vent that. This is just the way they chose to vent." Above all, Ms. Swartz wants the student body to know that the administration is willing to listen to different concerns and viewpoints. "There are reasons why we make the policies that we make. I don't make policies on my own. Mr. Tarshis doesn't make them on his own, and Mr. Thurston doesn't make them on his own. We all come together when we want to implement a new disciplinary policy."

She used the attendance policy as an example. "When we made the new attendance policy, the entire leadership team came together. The Principal, the Assistant Principal, the Athletic Director, the Dean - we all made that policy together. We knew there would be some pushback, but we welcome students to come chat with us, to voice their concerns. It helps us see the big picture." One final point Ms. Swartz wanted to make was the administration constantly working to find ways to improve these policies. "Some of the policies they're [free.dhs] is addressing, some of the advisory, suspension, and attendance policies... those are all valid policies."

To take a deeper look at the account, let's examine the blatantly untrue argument made on a post that was uploaded on January 15. "The idea that you can't smoke weed while being a successful student is outdated to say the least," claims the anonymous owner of free.dhs. This takes a similar tone to a caption under a picture that was uploaded just a day earlier, on January 14: "Students who aren't a threat to others don't need to be banned from our hallways. You're not solving anything by just suspending students who use nicotine."

While the claim that the academic success of students who may smoke marijuana has no scientific backing to stand on, there are numerous studies suggesting that marijuana has multiple harmful impacts on a teenager's still-developing brain. *Frontiers in Psychiatry* published a study in 2013, showing that earlier onset use of marijuana- which is defined as use starting before 16 years old -is associated with more severe cognitive consequences. Further evidence suggests that earlier onset use of marijuana, before the age of 18, is linked with poorer attention span, visual search, lower overall IQ, and executive functioning.

This study goes on to use statistics from a sample of 1,037 individuals, who were tracked from birth to the age of 38. The members of this group who showed signs of earlier onset use of marijuana showed the greatest change in IQ. As a group, they demonstrated a drop from an "average" childhood IQ to a "low-average" adult IQ. This group never achieved their predicted IQ, even after sustained abstinence well into adulthood.

The fact remains that marijuana is harmful on teens' developing brains, and that children under the age of 18 are prohibited from buying, selling, or otherwise possessing retail marijuana. It should also be noted that adults can be charged with a felony for giving marijuana products to an underage person.

Nicotine usage, specifically vaping, is also dangerous in its own right. According to health researchers at Yale, vaping has not been proven to help adult smokers kick the habit, and, in fact, juuling increases the risk of a teenager switching to regular cigarettes later in life. This, in addition to the fact that juuling is a relatively "new trend", paints an uncertain picture for teens who vape.

It should also be noted that nicotine is not a "harmless" drug. The National Institutes of Health show evidence of nicotine, along with tobacco and tobacco products, being a potential carcinogen. The NIH also states that nicotine "...is well known to have serious systemic side effects in addition to being highly addictive. It adversely affects the heart, reproductive system, lung, kidneys, etc... The only other known use of nicotine has been as an insecticide since the 17th century."



Mural, mural, on the wall...

STEVI CAMERON
Reporter

DHS students see art murals everyday walking through the halls. Van Gogh's famous painting *Starry Night*, *Scream* by Edvard Munch, and many others. These pieces have been embedded in DHS's atmosphere; however, NAHS has plans to add to DHS's art collection.

National Arts Honors Society has taken on the task of putting up murals around DHS since before art teachers, Ms. Karpel and Mr. Burnite, started working at the high school.

"When the school went under more renovations in the early 2000s, it left a lot of blank walls. And we just wanted to decorate up the school," said Mr. Burnite.

Explaining the origins of the idea to put up art murals, he recalls how Ms. Karpel led the majority of the mural projects, wanting to create familiar pictures providing a gallery of art history on the walls of the school. At first, the pieces were representative of each department in the school, but with all of the reorganization the high school has witnessed in the last few years, there is a demand for new images.

"We've gotten to a point where people have approached us and said they want a painting on the wall" said Burnite. The artists in NAHS do their best work within the demand of what the school wants. If a certain piece is desired in a certain place, NAHS has taken on the responsibility of getting it done and that is how they have worked year after year.

Opportunities to paint three new pieces have recently arisen around the school. Sr. Jessica Fiala will be heading the new wrestling mural, Sr. Alyssa Robertson and Sr. Haley Szczech are in charge of one going up in the kids day care, and there is a possible mural planned for the science department lead by Jr. Lorien Hoshall.

"The wrestling team wanted the demon mascot, but they didn't want the baby demon, they wanted something scarier," said Fiala. Their newest addition in the wrestling gym is almost complete and looking very intimidating so far. When approached by the wrestling team, they were given the idea to use the traditional demon mascot.

"We are planning on trying to finish it this month when the wrestling season is over," said Fiala. That way they have time to do it without being interrupted and can complete it for next season.

Time is one of the biggest obstacles for creating the murals, as the artist have to work around their school schedule as well as come in outside of school on the weekends or after school. This can be especially challenging with busy schedules

that most high schoolers have, if not with other activities, then with homework. "There are a lot of students that want to get it done and have high ambitions, but then there's the commitment of who's coming in so they can function as a group," said Mr. Burnite.

His availability is necessary to the hours NAHS students can work, as access to his room is important for painting the murals.

Fiala agrees that the students' commitment has been a challenge in creating the murals. This may have been a contribution to the lack of a new piece in the last three years.

"One of the hardest parts is mainly communication, especially trying to get a bunch of high schoolers together to work on it at the same time. It's a lot harder than I thought!" said Fiala.

Despite the gap from the last painting, NAHS has already overcome such roadblocks and is making progress on the three tasks they have undertaken.

"Once we get going it's pretty easy because we all love art!" said Fiala.

She has faith that now that they are organized, they will be able to complete the murals and get back on track to continue to liven up the walls of DHS. Mr. Burnite added how such pieces are able to express DHS culture.

"They brighten up the school and other work environments in such positive ways!" said Jr. Izzy Herringer, Secretary-Treasurer of NAHS. She is helping out with all of the murals but is primarily helping with the wrestling mural.

"Even if the student is waiting to talk to a teacher outside of a classroom, they are able to sit down and really admire a piece," said Burnite.

He laments the damage done to the art in the school though accepts that it is a price that comes with public art. Now he provides an opportunity for NAHS students who still need their hours of service work to go around the school and do art repair. Even with students who are able to go touch up damaged paintings, it is important to remember to respect your fellow students' artwork in DHS halls as they are a part of history as well as DHS itself.

"The intention of the art piece was to be placed up there to be what it was and to be appreciated or not, but not to be mocked or defaced," said Burnite. Overall, NAHS's artwork is very much appreciated throughout the school and very excited to have new pieces join the ranks of those already residing in our halls. NAHS has always aided DHS in various ways, often through its murals or by lending a hand (or paint brush) to other clubs and teams such as student council and wrestling.

"NAHS's purpose is to spread art awareness in the school and serve DHS through art," said Fiala.





HOROSCOPES



YOUR ASTROLOGICAL PREDICTIONS

Aries (March 21 - April 20):

As winter fades into spring, you'll probably feel like you should be taking more risks in your life, most notably in terms of seeking out a relationship. Tread lightly here, as the line between friendship and romance is bound to be blurry and confusing. Communication with a potential partner is vital, now more than ever.

Leo (July 23 - August 23):

Seeing as Leos are born during the summer months, you probably prefer warmer seasons to the harsh conditions of winter. As this shift occurs, you'll find that success under pressure will come easier and more frequently than ever. Take this as a sign to spend extra time on assignments or put in extra hours at work; it'll pay off.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21):

Your forward-thinking and diligent tendencies are a couple of components of your personality. During the winter, these may have slipped or faltered. This is no surprise, seeing as the coldest season is also one of stagnation. During the spring, make it a priority to put effort in whatever you pursue.

Taurus (April 21 - May 20):

As a rule of thumb, you're loyal in almost every aspect of your life. Once you're settled into a routine, you'd prefer to stay there. There isn't anything wrong with this; it's comforting and familiar. This season holds the urge to do something rebellious. If you haven't shown anyone in your life that you can be defiant, now is the time to.

Virgo (August 24 - September 23):

Your modesty and shyness, combined with a habit of sticking to certain tasks, has reduced your worldview. As the snow melts and spring begins to start, taking the time to pursue activities that will help broaden your horizons, such as volunteer work or extracurriculars, will have a lasting impact in all of life's facets.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 20):

Your prudent, conservative ways may have frozen over during the winter. So, people in your life, particularly those you may have been romantically pursuing, have felt closed off to the point of ceasing contact. This spring, it's time to flaunt the warmth your personality possesses, notably your humor and patience.

Gemini (May 21 - June 21):

Your ability to adapt quickly to change is a blessing and a curse. It makes stressful situations much easier to overcome. It doesn't leave any wiggle room for genuine self-review. Putting aside some time to take an honest look at yourself will ensure that an existential crisis won't occur.

Libra (September 24 - October 23):

The dreary months of winter have left you feeling disenchanted, with a lack of passion at the forefront of this bleakness. Spring represents a literal and symbolic change. Now, more than ever, is an opportunity to cultivate interests, reawaken old hobbies, and work on establishing deeper connections with friends.

Aquarius (January 21 - February 18):

The confines of winter have probably left your originality and creativity - which are normally key parts of your identity - washed up and forgotten. It's also possible that your sense of home, be it a physical place or people you associate with the term, is all but gone. Make an obligation to yourself to establish these.

Cancer (June 22 - July 22):

Your sign is notorious for being sensitive, and prone to mood swings. This is just an extension of your sympathetic tendencies. The transition from winter to spring will stir up intense feelings. The best way to combat these blues is by surrounding yourself with a support system of friends and family.

Scorpio (October 24 - November 22):

Infamously intense and assertive, there are moments where a softer, much more gentle side of your personality can shine through. Make an effort to shift your focus away from fiercer tendencies and several doors will be opened to you not only academically, but also in terms of relationships, possible careers.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20):

Intuition and imagination are two words you have always connected with. What wavers, however, is your sense of identity. Self-expression has always been something you have struggled with. Committing your time to experimenting with styles or trying new hobbies, may help this issue resolve itself.

What is your opinion on the Durango 9R Administration?



Freshman

"I think they're pretty good I don't have a problem with them, everything that they've done so far is fair."

- Kai Skowlund



Sophomore

"I somewhat understand suspensions I think the system is not on a case by case thing and it's very black and white."

- Jade Pruett



Junior

"I kind of don't really know a lot about the administration. I feel like they're not that vocal with students about what they are about."

- Connor Rea



Senior

"Academically, I think they're doing great. They're getting more kids to challenge themselves and take harder classes."

- Sarah Verling



Staff

"I would not want their job. I'd rather be in the classroom, where I feel like I'm more effective."

- Mr. Smith



Freshman

"I really like them. This is basically all I know - the principal of DHS stands outside every day and greets us and he's like connecting with the students, instead of just sitting up in his office every day."

- Kristina Bodewes



Sophomore

"I like it. I think they have a solid program going. They have some strong attributes."

- Evan Bastin



Junior

"I don't really think about it much. If you're asking about Dan Snowberger, I've heard a lot of bad things about him, and I just heard that he doesn't keep his word and he doesn't fulfill."

- Aspen Wyatt



Senior

"Honestly, I don't really like the higher up administrators, but all the teachers and principals are good."

- Jacob Behn



Staff

"Definitely wouldn't want to be in their shoes. I like to be in the classroom, working with the students on a regular basis. In administration, it's just hard to make everybody happy."

- Mrs. Gonzales

7 Things you can do for self care

MIA BOUDREAU, Lifestyles Editor

When balancing school, family, sports, and friends, it's important that you don't forget to take care of yourself. Self-care is a really important part of stress management and can help you to respond better in stressful situations. When feeling mentally or physically run down, it is harder to deal with and process stress. Try to make time for practicing self-care in your routine with activities like these.

Exercise.
Even short amounts of exercise can clear your head and keep you active.



Meditate.
Meditating can help you become more mindful in your day-to-day life.



Spend some time alone. Take time to yourself to think, reflect, and relax without pressure coming from anyone else.



2

Do something that makes you happy. Make some art, try a new recipe, read a book, find time to do something that brings you joy.



Journal. Writing in a notebook or journal gives you an opportunity to reflect and get your thoughts on paper.



5

Pamper yourself. Whether it's taking a bath, using fancy products, or doing your nails, take time doing something that makes you feel good.

7

Take breaks. Especially when doing continuous schoolwork or chores, make sure to take a break or rest as you need it.



6

Demon's Advocate

CAROLINE KNIGHT, *Head Editor*

This new "screen-time" app is making me think I might be addicted to my phone. What should I do about it?

The new screen time app is a great way to destroy your self esteem! Think you're being a productive member of society? Think you're making the most of the brief time you have on earth? Think again! The screen time app was, for me personally, a huge slap in the face. I won't share with you my screen time numbers because it was so embarrassing. Even my iPhone was telling me to get off my iPhone. Ironically enough, there are apps on your phone that can help you curb the addiction! When I'm feeling extra guilty, I use the app "Flipd", which allows you to set specific timers where you can't use your phone. When I'm feeling extra extra guilty, I delete Instagram for a while to give myself a break. Also, the screen time app itself lets you set timers for certain apps so you don't overuse them! This feels so sad and pathetic to even write, but there are lots of resources out there to help you become less of a boring loser like myself. Plus, if you're reading this, you're reading a real, hard-copy newspaper, and that feels like a step in the right direction.

I don't care what Mr. Hembree says, Senioritis is definitely a real thing. How am I supposed to keep showing up to this place?

I forgot to answer this until the very last minute. We are finalizing the paper now. I didn't do it because I didn't feel like it. I could think of so many better things to do. I had so many better places to be besides the journalism room. I'm graduating in two months so it doesn't even really matter. With all due respect, I would like Mr. Hembree to look me in my eyes - my cold, dead, 12th grade eyes - and tell me Senioritis isn't a real thing.



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Meet Jane! DHS' favorite demon

